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AFTER WILD SHEEP
IN THE ALTAI AND MONGOLIA

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AFTER WILD SHEEP
IN THE
ALTAI AND MONGOLIA

BY
E. DEMIDOFF[✓]

PRINCE SAN DONATO

AUTHOR OF "HUNTING TRIPS IN THE CAUCASUS"

WITH 82 ILLUSTRATIONS
AND MAP

LONDON
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**RED SHEEP
AND MONGOLIA**

BY
N. DEMIDOFF
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PREFACE

IN attempting to describe an expedition in search of the wild sheep of Mongolia (*Ovis ammon*), I am fully aware that I have undertaken a difficult task. The want of practical information concerning the country visited, the wild scenery, the curious habits and mode of life of the native Kalmuks and Kirghiz, the flora and fauna of a little-explored region, and finally an account of the mightiest of wild sheep in its natural haunts, are matters of such importance and so closely connected, that one may well feel embarrassed in commencing the narrative.

On the other hand, I have been so much pressed by English sportsmen to give an account, however brief, of the journey, its successes and failures, that feeling encouraged by the reception accorded last year to my volume entitled *Hunting Trips in the Caucasus*, I have decided to publish the present account of my experiences in the Altai Mountains and Mongolia.

May it meet with the approval of those to whom it is particularly addressed, viz. the sportsmen who have devoted the best years of their lives to the chase of wild animals in distant countries, and the naturalists, without whose aid the labours of the hunter, so far as science is concerned, might often be undertaken in vain.

In addition to my own photographs here reproduced, I am indebted for others to Mr. St. George Littledale, Professor Sapojnikoff (of Tomsk University), and Mr. Ford Barclay, to whom my grateful acknowledgments are due. and should here be recorded.

DEMIDOFF.

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AFTER WILD SHEEP

IN THE

ALTAI AND MONGOLIA

CHAPTER I.

From London to Barnaoul *viâ* St. Petersburg and Moscow—Meeting with Littledale—Nijni-Novgorod—Down the Volga ; up the Kama to Taguil—Three days at Taguil—Our luggage—Cook—Special Car—Journey to Krivostchekovo (Ob River)—Governor of Tomsk—General Boldyreff, head of the Altai district—Ispravnik—Village of Nikolaievsk—Up the Ob to Barnaoul.

It was in the spring of 1897 that, strolling down Piccadilly, my wife and I, on passing the well-known window of Mr. Rowland Ward, were struck by the unusual size and massiveness of some heads of wild sheep which were there on view. On making inquiry we were told that they were heads of *Ovis ammon*, lately secured by Major Cumberland on the Russo-Chinese slopes of the Altai Mountains. There were six or seven of them, and I think I never was more impressed by any trophies I had

seen. I at once decided that the year should not pass before I also would attempt to make a similar bag. From that moment my only thought was to start as soon as possible. I accordingly endeavoured to secure all the information possible on the subject, chiefly, of course, on the locality where the animals in question had been shot. Failing to find Major Cumberland himself, who I understood had set out on another and more distant journey, I luckily came across the interpreter who had accompanied him to the Altai, Joseph Abbas by name, and with whose useful help I marked on the map the route leading to those happy hunting grounds. He told me that there was plenty of sport to be obtained, that the magnificent sheep whose heads I had so much admired were by no means scarce, and that if we only went further into Mongolia we would come across virgin country where no sportsman had yet had the pick of such trophies. To this I of course agreed with the greatest enthusiasm, having four good summer months before me, and at once engaged Joseph's services, enjoining him to be ready to start by the middle of April. In the meantime I communicated this plan to my friend Mr. St. George Littledale, who had also seen the heads, and who was equally keen to secure similar trophies.

Mrs. Littledale said she could not be left behind ; my wife also insisted upon accompanying us, and in this way our party of four was made up. We calculated that from Moscow it would take us little more than a month to reach our grounds, and accordingly decided to meet there between the 10th and 15th of May, so as to reach the Siberian frontier towards the middle of June. Moreover, though very impatient to start, I had been told that some of the large rivers we should have to cross on our way were absolutely unfordable until the beginning of June ; the roads, too, were supposed to be very bad in spring (our subsequent experience indicated that this was the case all the year round) ; several passes would also be difficult to negotiate—all this delayed our departure and postponed our rendezvous at Moscow until the middle of May.

Having concluded our preparations in London, we started, my wife and I, for St. Petersburg early in April. Our tents and stores and other impedimenta had been shipped a few days previously to Libau, a port which at that time of year was not frozen. I had a few matters to settle in St. Petersburg before leaving, the most important being to secure the services of a good doctor, who would not mind roughing it, and who was accustomed to travelling

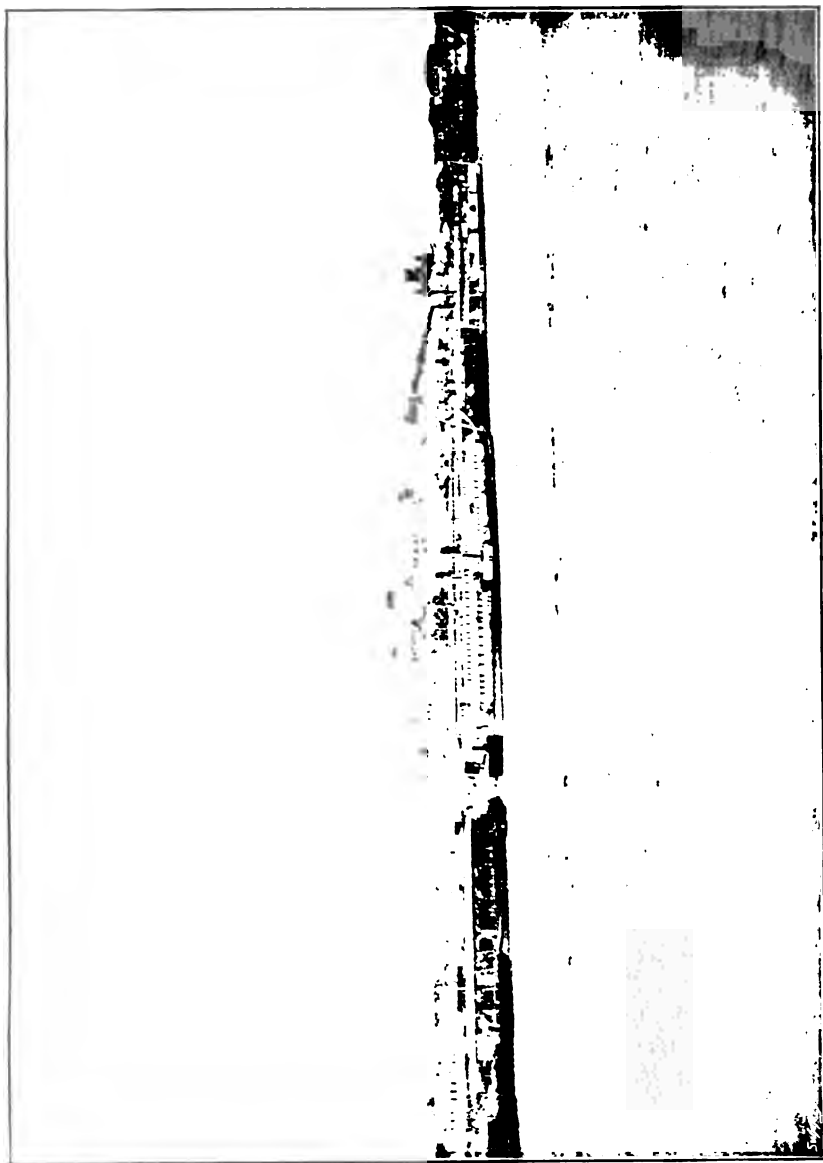
in a wild country. The choice fell upon Dr. Newsy, who had been actively engaged in Russian Turkestan during the time when cholera was raging there. He seemed most willing to accompany us, and expressed the intention of taking numerous photographs and collecting botanical as well as geological specimens for the St. Petersburg Museum. I received a most encouraging letter from Mr. P. Semenoff, Vice-President of the Imperial Geographical Society, urging me to bring back as much information as I could on the country I was about to visit, adding that the slightest details, to whatever branch of science they might belong, would be most acceptable to the Society. Mr. Alpheraki, a Russian naturalist, called upon me and gave me a highly interesting account of his travels to Kuldja and the Yulduz valleys, stating that he had brought back many new species of insects and plants, and expressing the hope that I would likewise contribute to his collection. Unfortunately I was wholly unprepared for such scientific objects, and deprecated his too sanguine expectations.

Mr. Alpheraki was at that time (and I believe is still) engaged in completing a work on the *Anatida* of the Russian Empire. He was kind enough to show me some advanced coloured plates which were to illustrate his interesting book, and they appeared

to me highly successful. He told me that there was a particular duck which was supposed to breed on the Mongolian plateaux, and which he was most desirous to obtain ; he gave me a water-colour sketch of it, asking me to try and secure a specimen for him. I promised to do my best, but unluckily failed in my attempts, though the Kalmuks to whom I showed the drawing assured me that they had often seen the species on the numerous lakes of the Kosh-Agatch plain. I entrusted Dr. Newsky with the scientific portion of our researches, intending to devote myself entirely to chase of sheep and ibex. To my great disappointment, however, he also was unprepared for the task, and the small efforts made in that direction resulted only in a collection of plants which my wife made on our way from one camp to the other, a list of which will be given later on. Cristo, my valet, who accompanied me on this journey, proved very useful in many ways.

We started from St. Petersburg, my wife and I, the Doctor and Cristo, on the 13th of May, reaching Moscow the following morning, where we found Joseph, the interpreter, awaiting us on the station platform. Mr. and Mrs. Littledale had just arrived at the Slaviansky Bazaar, and we lunched merrily together, talking over our forthcoming trip. They

had secured as servant a first-rate man, Gabriel by name, who had accompanied us the previous year to the Caucasus, and with whom Littledale had been thoroughly satisfied. He rendered himself very useful in camp, and by no means the least of his accomplishments was his art of skinning heads. In order not to waste a whole day, as our boat was to leave Nijni-Novgorod on the following afternoon, we decided to quit Moscow at 4 p.m., reaching Nijni early next morning. Our baggage, amounting to about a ton, was to be sent by the next steamer and join us at Taguil, a place in the Ural Mountains belonging to my family, where we intended to stop two or three days for the purpose of giving the ladies a rest before commencing the long and dreary journey on the Siberian Railway, and for the purpose also of getting our luggage into a more expeditional shape, taking only what was immediately wanted, and leaving the remainder to follow later. Moreover, we had to engage the services of a cook. Accordingly, early on May 15th we found ourselves at Nijni in time to see the preparations that were being made for the great annual fair. The banks of the Volga were covered with goods of all kinds, which find their way there from all parts of Asia, and the traffic was just beginning, owing to the opening of



ON THE VOLGA.

the rivers. Our steamer, the s.s. *Ekaterinburg*, of the Lubimoff Company, was awaiting us alongside the pier, and at 1.30 p.m. we began slowly to move down the great river Volga.

It was a somewhat monotonous journey, the scenery on either side bearing a decided look of uniformity: large rolling plains covered with wheat or grass, woods very scarce, now and then higher banks overshadowing the riverside, and a few villages scattered here and there, conspicuous by their churches towering above the wooden huts and glistening in the sun. The weather, it must be owned, was beautiful, and the air as transparent as possible, such as one only encounters in Russia in spring-time. I have nowhere seen a more striking wakening up of nature than in that country. Every bud, every blade of grass at that season seems to be alive, and birds appear to rejoice more exuberantly than anywhere else. Long strings of swans, geese, and ducks appearing from the south, hundreds of yards high, are then constantly observable, and life shows itself in its utmost intensity.

Our steamer called at several places before we hove in sight of Kasan, the great Tartar town, which we reached at 6 a.m. on the following morning. Here we stopped till 11 a.m. Tons of cargo were shipped, and we began to fear that we might miss our train

at Perm if we were delayed much longer. Here also we witnessed a curious and lively bargaining affray between the captain of our ship and a crowd (I was going to say a herd) of squalid-looking Tartars who, wanting to be conveyed to some landing-place further on, made offers for the price of their passage. The captain was demanding 1 rouble 50 kopecks apiece, shouting from the top of the deck; the Tartars were willing to give only 1 rouble 30 kopecks. Finally, after a long and noisy dispute, the bargain was struck at 1 rouble 43 kopecks, and the whole throng poured in with yells and a strong smell of Russian leather boots and unwashed humanity.

After leaving Kasan we soon branched off from the Volga up the Kama, and saw many icebergs floating down the river. Here the scenery changed as we neared Perm. Both sides of the stream were covered with beautiful dense fir woods and pine. The weather still remained cloudless, and in the best of spirits we landed at Perm on the 18th of May at 9.30 p.m.

Although a couple of hours late, we found that we were in time for the train, which started at 11 p.m. We also received the good news that our baggage had left Nijni by the following steamer, and would find us in three days at Taguil. On the morning



TAGUIL.

L . .

of the 15th of May we reached Taguil and drove to the house.

Taguil is the head town, or rather the head village, of a vast mining district in the centre of the Ural Mountains. It cannot be called a town, not having a municipality, but as regards size it is larger than many towns, and contains over 30,000 inhabitants, principally workmen and engineers. It lies at the foot of the "Sheleznaiia Gora" (*i.e.* iron mountain), one of the richest in iron-ore, and the works are spread all round it in order to avoid expenses of transport. Copper is also to be found within a few miles in great abundance, and is melted at the other end of the village. Platinum and gold are likewise distributed in the neighbourhood.

At the head of the village lies a lake about twelve miles long, into which flows the river Taguil, yielding considerable water-power for the iron-works. The country round Taguil presents the aspect of low rolling hills covered with pine, fir, and birch woods, which become denser as one proceeds further from the inhabited districts. These woods contain a fair amount of game. I have myself shot elk and cariboo within fifty miles north of Taguil. Brown bears abound, also the Siberian Roe-deer (*Capreolus pygargus*), which I have secured close to the village,

and which I believe is identical with the roe which we found in the wooded regions of the Altai. I have been lately informed that a hunter of the Ekaterinburg Shooting Club brought news that he had come across three large beasts in the woods which he had



LAKE TAGUIL.

never seen before. On showing him various drawings in a book of Natural History and on reaching that of an Aurochs, he immediately recognised it as resembling the animals he had seen. Aurochs, therefore, may exist in the dense Siberian Taiga and may have come over ; but I give this information with all reserve. As regards birds, Capercaillie and

Black Game are found in great numbers. The native hunters, who frequent the woods in search of fur-bearing animals, such as Sable (now becoming very scarce), Siberian Squirrel, White Fox, etc., assert that



ON TAGUIL RIVER.

they would rather meet a Bear in the woods than an Elk, which is supposed to be more dangerous than any other animal. A local proverb on the subject always struck me: "For bear prepare your bed, for elk your coffin." The Taguil estate lies on the very boundary between Europe and Asia, and a huge red post stands

in the middle of the woods with the inscription : "Here ends Europe, here begins Asia." There are also many traditions of the passage of Ermak, the adventurer, who in the sixteenth century crossed the Ural Mountains with a few followers and conquered Siberia for the Russian Tsar, Ivan the Terrible. Many rocks bear witness to his journey, with inscriptions in places where he had camped. A few villages are scattered about the country, most of them having sprung up owing to mines or gold washings in the neighbourhood. At their outskirts usually stands a shed where the peasants, each in turn, place bread and "kvas," a Russian beverage made of barley. A wooden board above the shed bears these strange words : "For the miserable." This is an old custom of the country. Russian convicts, who contrive to escape from the Eastern Siberian galleys, cross the Ural range on their way back to Europe. Being short of food, and in order to obtain it, they used to raid the villages by night, and bloodshed would often ensue. In order to put an end to this state of things, the inhabitants decided to provide these outlaws with food in the way I have described, and thus prevent the frequent murders that took place. The mining people are sometimes very savage and cruel ; in one case a girl was slowly burnt to



"SHELEZNAIA GORA" (i.e. IRON MOUNTAIN).

death for non-compliance with the wishes of her torturers. Other instances of this kind might be given, but it would carry me too far from my subject.

On the day we arrived at Taguil (the Littledales, my wife, and myself), we visited the iron-works, and having heard that there was some fair woodcock-shooting to be obtained in the vicinity of the town, we decided (Littledale and I) to go out that evening with our guns. Spring woodcock-shooting is a favourite sport in Russia. It is known under the name of "Tiaga," which signifies a marked place where woodcock fly towards evening in search of their mates, skimming the tops of trees and uttering a hissing cry, which is heard from afar. They usually skim in circles round the place, and the guns are posted in the centre of the line of flight. I have heard of a dozen birds having been bagged in this way between 7 and 7.30 p.m. We travelled in a luggage van for about ten miles along the new railway that had just been constructed to the works, and soon found ourselves in the midst of the woods. As the sun was setting I heard the first woodcock's cry, followed immediately by shots. Nothing came in my direction, but Littledale secured three. We returned in the dark, and found our platform-car waiting for us.

The next two days were spent in visiting the mines. The ladies drove down to see the platinum washings, whilst we went after ducks on the lake; but the wind was so strong that we did not succeed in getting any, and had to give it up. Through the courtesy of General Pavlovsky, the chief inspector of the West Siberian Railway, to whom I had wired, a special car was placed at our disposal for our four days' journey along the line to the Ob River, where we branched off towards Barnaoul. This was, indeed, a great relief to us, there being nothing more tiring for ladies than a long journey in a bad railway-car.

Our house-car, for the next few days thus amiably provided, arrived at Taguil on the 26th, and we went to the station to see it. It was a comfortable first-class carriage, with plenty of room for our party, rifles, and hand-baggage—by no means a trifle. In the meantime I had engaged the services of a cook, Vassili by name, a young fellow who had worked in the platinum mines, and was willing to accompany us and show us his proficiency in culinary art. He proved quite a success, and none of us ever regretted having engaged him. On the afternoon of May 22nd our anxiously expected *impedimenta* at last arrived, and we began forthwith sorting our stores, packing up what we strictly required into carefully weighed



TAGUIL IRON-WORKS.

pony loads, and leaving articles of luxury behind. The house was in a state of great confusion ; every single thing was taken out, and the floor resembled a London grocery shop. A box containing two gross of safety matches had been detained, for some reason, by the Russian Customs, who promised to forward it after examination to Barnaoul. We found it there on our return journey ! The next day was devoted to similar occupation, and on the morning of May 24th, everything being ready, we left Taguil at 11 a.m. The weather was quite settled, and we soon found it warmer than we liked. Four hours brought us to Ekaterinburg, from which place we branched off due south through the most important mining districts of the Ural Mountains, reaching Tcheliabinsk early next morning. From this place the Western Siberian Railway starts, and here begins the dreary, monotonous view of Siberian steppes and marshes, which we had to contemplate for three long days. The sun was scorching hot as we crawled along at the rate of twelve miles an hour through these immense flat plains. We found villages very scarce ; Kourgan, Petropavlovsk, Omsk, and Kainsk were the only large towns *en route*. At the stations hardly any provisions were to be got, and we had to rely entirely upon our own stores. Now and

then, outside the station-house, we saw long wooden planks set up, on which the peasants of the neighbouring villages had placed chickens, bread, or fish, sometimes water melons, to sell. A few kopecks was the utmost one could spend. I must confess



"OUTSIDE THE STATION-HOUSE WE SAW LONG WOODEN PLANKS SET UP."

that melons were greatly appreciated by our party, owing to the intense heat.

We saw great numbers of ducks in the marshy steppes round Kainsk; at other places, where the soil was dry, it was cultivated. The Akmolinsk and Semiretchensk countries are supposed to be the granaries of Siberia and Russia, where wheat is

largely imported, especially in time of famine. Trees were to be seen here and there, mostly birch, but hardly close enough to form woods. In fact, it may be said that the whole tract of land between the Ural Mountains and the Ob is practically bare. The exceedingly slow pace at which we advanced was most trying. In confirmation of this statement I may refer to a lively scene of which we were witnesses. The train on quitting a station had left behind some of the passengers, who had gone out into the fields to pick flowers. At the next station, where we halted a long time, we saw our wretched fellow-travellers who had been dropped running breathless along the line, and eventually overtaking the train with frantic yells and waving of caps.

On the 28th of May we reached the Ob River, and were heartily greeted by General Lomatchevsky, Governor of Tomsk, to whom I had sent a letter of introduction, and General Boldyreff, chief of the Altai district, whose headquarters were at Barnaoul, and who received us in a most hospitable manner. These gentlemen informed us that we should find it a very difficult job to follow the Tchouia Valley up to Kosh-Agatch, especially with ladies, the path being in places exceedingly narrow. No representatives of the female sex had ever tried it, save

a few native Kalmuk matrons. As for ladies' saddles, they seemed to think that they were entirely out of question. This was confirmed by the Ispravnik (chief police officer) of the Barnaoul district, to whom I was then introduced, and who was appointed by General Lomatchevsky to accompany us to the Siberian frontier. Being a true Siberian citizen and native of the Altai, the Ispravnik gave us a deal of information on the country, and strongly urged us not to proceed into Mongolia, where, he said, our Kalmuk staff would probably refuse to follow us, fearing that their horses might be stolen by the native Mongols and Kirghiz. He was an honest, straightforward man, but somewhat rough with his subordinates, a failing which later on caused not a few misunderstandings.

The Governor of Tomsk was as civil as possible to us, and told us that he was, at that moment, working out a plan of converting the Tchouia path into a road for the tea caravans, which would undoubtedly in that case adopt this route from China, through Ulias-soutai and Kobdo, in preference to the ancient road through Kiachta, which was much longer. In fact, one of the leading Russian tea merchants said he had already received great quantities of tea through Kosh-Agatch, and had found it far more profitable,

notwithstanding that he had had to reload his goods from camels to horses. The Russian Government, however, did not then seem inclined to spend a large sum in carrying out the submitted scheme, and an engineer was commissioned to report on the probable cost. According to my observations a good deal of dynamite would be wanted, sheer rocky falls into the river being numerous. It was here, while lunching on board the small steamer that was to convey us and our fortunes up the Ob, that, for the first time, I was given a full account of the legend of the so-called "Father Theodor" by our friend the Ispravnik, who was a young police officer at Tomsk at the time of Father Theodor's death in the sixties. I had always considered this legend as one of the most curious and interesting, and it may be worth while to relate the facts round which an impenetrable mystery still hovers.

In almost all Siberian villages there is scarcely a house which does not contain the portrait of an old man known as "Father Theodor," whose memory, as a saint, will outlive many generations throughout the country. About the year 1830, it is said, a man appeared at Tomsk under the name of Theodor. No one knew whence he came or who he was. The only fact that had been confirmed was that he had

been caught by the police without a passport on the Ural borders of Siberia, and after due punishment for refusing to disclose his identity (at that time the penalty was the knout) had been transferred as a settler for life to Tomsk. There everyone was struck by his cultivated manner, his wonderful knowledge of languages (for besides Russian he spoke English and French perfectly), his gentle bearing, noble features, and quiet mode of life. In a few years his fame spread throughout the whole of Siberia. The common people began to consider him a saint, and would gather in crowds around his cell in order to receive his blessing. He lived in a small room in the house of a rich merchant named Somoff, who had given him hospitality, but he refused all comfort and luxury, took very little food, and prayed constantly. One thing he never refused to do, viz. to teach children, and it was noticed that his favourite subject was Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. He was acquainted with every detail of the war, seemed to know every general who had taken part in it, and could describe every battle with precision. He taught the children to love Russia and honour the memory of Alexander I. the Beloved. In this manner he lived over thirty years at Tomsk, ever silent about his own personality, and sowing the seeds

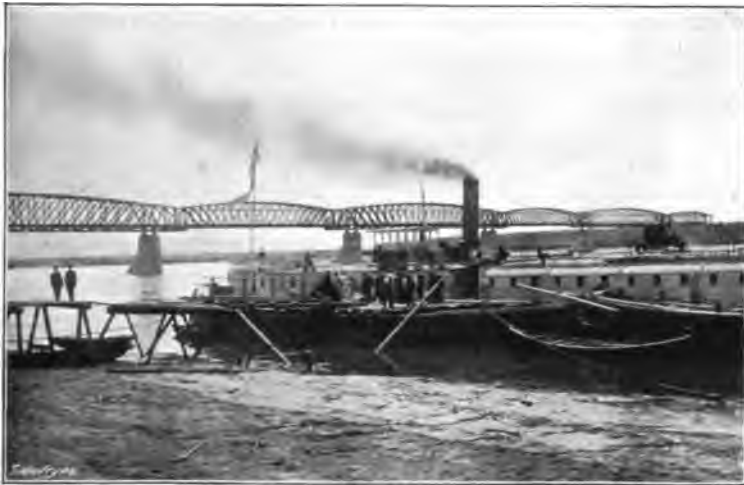
of religion and instruction throughout the whole district. He died in extreme old age, as he had lived, with the stoicism and calmness which faith alone can afford. It is said that he confided to his host on his death-bed who he was, under oath of secrecy, and the papers which were found in his possession were despatched by Somoff by special messenger to St. Petersburg, where it is supposed they were destroyed by order of the Emperor Nicholas. Rumours began to spread over the country that he was no other than the Tsar Alexander I., and a consideration of the facts of the desire of that monarch to abdicate ; his supposed death at Taganrog after a short and mysterious illness ; his coffin not having been opened in Moscow, according to the Russian custom, in order that the people might see the body of their deceased sovereign ; the coincidence of dates when Theodor was arrested as a vagabond ; his education, patriotism, and full knowledge of the French invasion ; his stately figure and noble features, resembling, it was said, those of Alexander's—all these facts, I repeat, only helped to strengthen the conclusions of the people. Moreover, by the care of his friend Somoff a cross had been placed over his tomb, in the cemetery at Tomsk, bearing the initials **А**. The Ispravnik who related

the story to us had been an eye-witness of this curious circumstance, and had been himself commissioned to take off this cross by night so as not to create a disturbance in the town. These are the facts, which need no comment. I give them as I heard them, and I think it doubtful whether history will ever unravel the mystery.

General Lomatchevsky gave us some interesting accounts of convicts. Amongst others he told us that a few years ago there appeared at Tomsk a man who gave himself out as Prince —, saying that he was travelling for his own pleasure. The General asked him to dinner, and found him a delightful companion. Some days later came a report that a dangerous convict had escaped from the galleys, and the visitor on being summoned to produce his passport confessed that he could no longer conceal his identity, and that he was the convict of whom the police were in search, but that he considered himself amply rewarded by the Governor's excellent dinner!

At 2 p.m. we parted with General Lomatchevsky, who wished us success, and the steamer began advancing slowly up the Ob. We passed under the magnificent railway bridge over the broad river, leaving to our left the village of Nikolaevsky. This

village, owing to its geographical position, had grown in a few months to considerable dimensions. Where a year ago there were only a few stray huts, nearly 20,000 inhabitants, chiefly colonists, had now taken up their abode, and the Government was on the



BRIDGE OVER THE OB.

point of converting the place into a town. General Boldyreff and the Ispravnik entertained us most agreeably during the journey to Barnaoul, where we were due early on May 30th.

The banks of the Ob presented on either side low rolling steppes, mostly bare and cultivated land, but as we entered the vast Altai district pine forests and

cedar woods were to be seen, and grew denser as we advanced. Villages were extremely scarce, the steamer calling only at four or five landing-places during the forty hours we were on board. The distance by land is much shorter, and takes about sixteen hours with good horses, but owing to the wide zigzags of the river and the comparatively slow pace at which we went against the strong current, we could hardly expect to reach our destination sooner. At the few stations where the steamer halted I was struck by the beautiful sight of rock-cherry bushes in full bloom; the banks were literally covered with snowy-white flowers, in which numbers of nightingales sang in praise of spring. The weather was cloudless, and added to the enjoyment of the wild scenery. In addition to this, the General and the Ispravnik gave highly interesting descriptions of the regions we were about to visit, with valuable information on the Kalmuks and their ways, intermingling their accounts with many Siberian tales and anecdotes. High were our expectations, and every sportsman will understand the feelings we experienced in anticipation of the sport to which we so keenly looked forward. We did our best in translating to share these accounts with the Littledales, who were under the same spell as ourselves.

On May 30th, at 8.30, we came in sight of Barnaoul, and landed safely at nine. General Boldyreff had most obligingly placed his house at our disposal, thus giving us a new proof of Eastern hospitality, and, gratefully accepting his invitation, we drove to his residence. Barnaoul is the largest and practically the only town of the Altai district which belongs personally to the Emperor. It was given to the Empress Elizabeth in the middle of the eighteenth century by one of my ancestors, whose monument stands in one of the squares of Barnaoul, and has been ever since a private estate of the Crown.

The whole area of the Government is over 200 square miles of wooded country, containing silver mines, iron-works, and coal. Madame Boldyreff received us with the greatest kindness, and housed us in most luxurious rooms. Having packed up a few more supplies, we carted our luggage next day (in order not to be delayed by it) for Bisk, a small town lying on the junction of the Ob and Bia rivers, and thence to Ongudai, where we would have to load it on ponies, and send it on with Joseph and our cook to accompany the twelve heavy cart loads. The Littledales were to start on the following day by short stages.

We postponed our departure until the 3rd of June,

intending to travel straight through to Ongudai, where we expected to find our companions and the baggage safely arrived.

The weather was cold and rainy during the whole time we remained at Barnaoul. On the whole the climate is very severe, being extremely continental, and winter is long and dreary. No fruit grows in the district, not even apples. In the meantime we visited the town under General Boldyreff's supervision. We found an interesting museum, with specimens of stuffed animals of the district: Wild Sheep, Ibex, Maral, and, to my great astonishment, a Tiger, which I was told had been shot many years before in the neighbourhood of Barnaoul. This appeared to me very unlikely, though not impossible. In the museum we saw a fine geological and mineralogical collection, and a well-supplied library, chiefly containing works on the Altai, by Tchichatcheff, the Russian traveller, Bunge and Ledebour, the well-known botanists, with splendid plates of the different plants of the district. I was also struck by the active interest which the authorities at Barnaoul take in the welfare and education of the common people, an interest which seemed to me to be much above the average in comparison with that of European Russia. For instance, there is a special hall, with a garden

attached to it, converted into a public reading-room. A committee has been formed with the view of encouraging theatrical performances for the common people, and several elementary schools are kept and maintained by this association.

After having bade adieu to our hosts, we left Barnaoul, as we had decided, early on June 3rd, provided with detailed maps through General Boldyreff's kind attention, and in his own comfortable carriage, which he lent us till we reached Ongudai.



ARRIVAL AT KOSH-AGATCH.

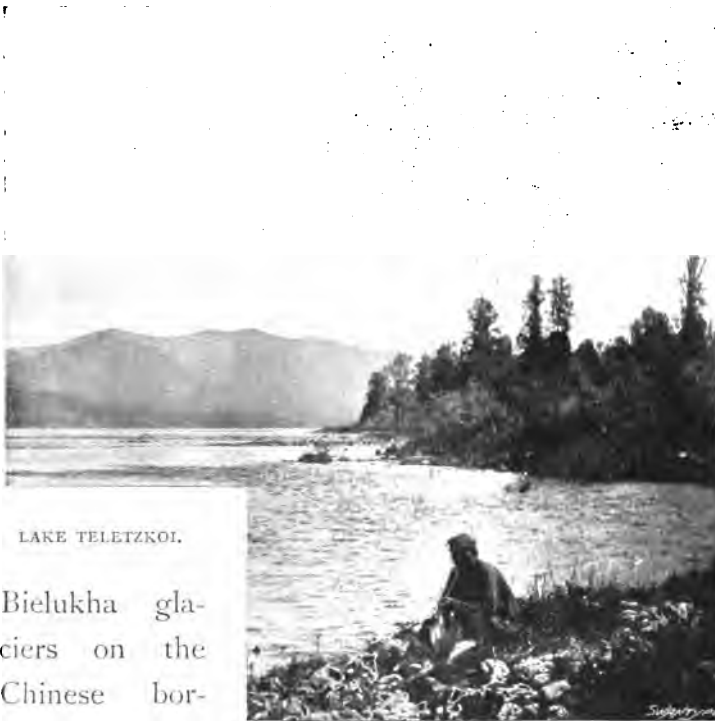
CHAPTER II.

From Barnaoul through Bisk and Ongudai to Kosh-Agatch (Siberian frontier)—Tarantass—Bad Roads—Bisk—First sight of the Altai Mountains—The “Maralnik,” or Deer Park at Shebalina—Kalmuks—Ongudai—Russian Police Official, M. Meyer—Preparations at Ongudai—Tchouia Valley—Singular Performance of Native Priest—Kosh-Agatch—Customs Official—Zaissan Semion—Taba—Duck Shooting.

THE distance between Barnaoul and Bisk is 150 versts, or about 120 miles. The country presents the aspect of low, rolling, grassy steppes, through which wind the two great tributaries of the Ob, the Bia and the Katoun, the former flowing out of Lake Teletzkoie (the largest lake in the Altai district), the latter drawing its sources from the



SOURCE OF THE KATOUN.



LAKE TELETZKOI.

Bielukha glaciers on the Chinese borders. Though

the road was as bad as it could be, we managed to reach Bisk late in the evening. Soon after quitting Barnaoul we had to cross two branches of the Ob in ferry-boats, there being no bridges in sight. These ferry-boats were worked in the most primitive fashion by horses tied to two cross-posts; they were made to turn round and round, thus bringing into motion a huge capstan. Planks were placed across so as to enable our tarantasses to embark, which

was by no means an easy matter, one of the planks breaking down under our weight, and if it had not been for the timely impulse given by the driver's whip we should certainly have taken an involuntary bath. The water at that time of year was very high, owing to melting snows in the mountains, while



TARANTASSES.

the current was very strong. No further accident occurred, however, and we were safely landed on the opposite side.

Pursuant to the Ispravnik's orders, horses awaited us at every post-house, which helped considerably to lessen the delay. The eight or ten villages through which we passed were literally drowned in mud; at

places our wheels were hidden from view, and it required much persuasion on the part of our driver to make the wretched ponies struggle through. The villages struck me by their size, and the inhabitants seemed fairly well off.

Most of the peasants here are descendants of Russian colonists who had emigrated and acquired a certain prosperity, owing to a liberal allotment of ground such as is unknown in European Russia. Their ways and manners are entirely different from those of the peasants in Central Russia. Here one observes a stronger spirit of independence and sense of personal freedom. Labour and intelligence are the striking features; common people do not kneel down before officials or noblemen, but consider it more natural to shake hands. Carefully tended education, and residence at a distance from all-centralising authorities have done more to civilise the country than any efforts on the part of the Government. Further colonisation, however, of these parts has been stopped, and emigrants from Russia are now being directed eastwards, where large tracts of land still await human hands and cultivation. Another reason for the welfare of the country is, I believe, the absence of common property which exists in most parts of European

Russia, where peasants are only tenants of the land, and are shifted by decisions of the community from one bit of ground to another; the result being that they never care to improve ground which next year may be taken away and allotted to someone



BISK.

else. Here every peasant is a small proprietor, and the Government land tax is cheerfully paid.

In one of the villages our tarantass wheels at last succumbed to the overwhelming mud, and caused a long delay. The mud, indeed, was so deep that all traffic was stopped, and the inhabitants had great difficulty in wading from one side of the street to the other. We reached Bisk in the dark,



BIELUKHA GLACIERS.

and there found a similar state of things. It took us a long time to reach the merchant's house where rooms had been prepared for us.

The Littledales had already passed on their way to Ongudai, for which place we decided to start the next morning. We found the authorities most hospitable and kind, and the police officials were placed at our disposal in case we needed anything. Bisk is the second largest town of the district, and is situated on the junction of the Bia and Katoun, which rivers unite to form the Ob a little further down. The impression conveyed to my mind was that of a large dirty village. It is the last town of any importance before reaching the Siberian frontier, and is inhabited by many Russian merchants who own the best houses and are well off, owing to their successful trade in tea and furs. Of late years Sable has become exceedingly scarce, but Marmots are found in great numbers in the Altai Mountains, and constitute a large source of revenue to these merchants, who buy the skins of these animals by thousands at a low price (10 to 20 kopecks each) and send them through the Irbit annual fair to Europe, where they are dyed and sold at great profit. Kalmuk natives shoot these Marmots in a curious manner; they go out after them with a fox's brush, which they carry



MARMOT HUNTING.

slung to their girdle. As soon as they see a Marmot sitting outside its hole they begin to wave this brush; the Marmot from curiosity remains motionless, watching the peculiar proceedings, whilst the hunter gradually approaches and shoots it at the distance of a few yards. We saw large numbers of these animals on the hills as well as of a smaller kind of rodent—*Mus citilus*.

At Bisk we were most comfortably entertained at one of the merchant's houses, and, though rather tired, started early next morning for Ongudai. The distance from Bisk to this village was about 220 versts, or 190 miles. By means of ferry-boats we crossed the two tributaries of the Ob, Bia and Katoun, without accident, and were soon trotting along the steppes. We could now plainly distinguish ahead of us, through a dim blue haze, the first outlines of the Altai peaks. At first the country presented a similar appearance to that between Barnaoul and Bisk, but as we approached the mountains, woods began to appear on all sides, principally cedar and larch. The villages we passed bore the same aspect as those we had seen before. Deep mud prevailed everywhere, especially at a place called Bielokourikha, where in some places people were unable to leave their houses in consequence of it. There were said to be hot springs around the village, and perhaps a mud bath might have cured our aching limbs. Its curative powers at all events had been tried by people from Tomsk, who, we were told, had succeeded in getting rid of their rheumatism.

We left this Siberian Franzensbad, however, after a hard struggle, and succeeded in reaching a village

called Altaiskoie about 4 p.m., having covered eighty long versts. We were now entering the mountains, and although the Ispravnik warned us that we had better spend the night here, there being a difficult pass to cross in the present state of the roads, and a distance of fifty versts separated us from Tchergà, where we intended to halt, we disregarded his advice, and continued our journey. We were sorry afterwards for our rashness. On leaving Altaiskoie, after a quick change of horses, we began the ascent through a small valley, overhung on either side with rocky boulders. The country was well wooded with larch, pine, and cedar, and at places we passed large tracts of charred wood, giving evidence of numerous fires. The advance was very slow, and we soon found that we should have to grope our way in the dark. Towards 9 p.m. the road grew steeper as we began to ascend the Komàr pass. The road was swampy and very trying for the horses, the mud in places being deep and sticky. In addition to this it was a moonless night, and our tarantass, though more comfortable, was a heavy weight to drag. Thus heavily handicapped we soon struggled behind, our friend the Ispravnik having caught us up in the dark, on his lighter vehicle, and gone on in front. Finally, at 11 p.m., our

horses refused to proceed further. The last jerk aroused us from our pleasant slumber, to find ourselves stuck half-way up a long muddy slope. It was a cold night, and the rain began drizzling down as our driver descended from his box, and told us that unless we had fresh horses it was impossible to advance further. Nothing was to be done but to send him back to the village for men and horses, and to await his return. In this piteous condition we remained *four hours*, until about 3 a.m. we welcomed our liberators, who after many efforts dragged the tarantass out of this awkward hole. Another hour brought us to the top of the pass, where we met about thirty men on horseback sent from Tchergà by the Ispravnik, who could not understand what had happened to us. We reached the village at 6 a.m. much exhausted after twenty hours' driving, and took a well-earned rest. We had now fairly penetrated the low Altai country.

In the afternoon we started for the next village, Shebalina, distant about forty versts. Here the road was infinitely better, the hills slightly higher, and the scenery wilder, though presenting the same features. We were installed in a nice clean house belonging to a Russian merchant trading in maral horns. Close by was a large "maralnik," or enclosure for Maral,

with a stream trickling down the grassy slope. Here about 150 Maral, both stags and hinds, were confined, enabling us to contemplate them at our leisure. It was a sight worth seeing; these fine deer fed quietly near us, and, knowing their master's call, would gather round him and take bread and oats



DEER PARK AT SHEBALINA.

from his hands. Some of the stags carried good horns—in velvet at that time of year. The hinds appeared tamer than the stags, which (as the merchant told us) seemed to become wilder as the time approached for the painful operation of cutting the horns while in the velvet, generally towards the middle of June. Some of the animals had been



"KNOWING THEIR MASTER'S CALL, WOULD GATHER ROUND HIM."

bred in the enclosure, others had been caught in the woods, when young, by native Kalmuks with dogs, in winter, when deep snows render this task easier. The proprietor told us that one of these



MARAL HIND.

stags had sought freedom by clearing the seven-foot wooden fence, and had remained several months in the hills, returning eventually in the same sporting way. There are many similar enclosures in the Altai district, especially in the eastern parts, and statistics show that about 6,000 deer are thus enclosed in

parks, constituting one of the most important trades of the country with China. The stags' horns, while still "in velvet," are sawn off before they reach their full growth. For this purpose there is constructed in one corner of the park a small wooden enclosure, with a narrow passage sunk in the ground to a depth corresponding to the animal's height. The stag is driven into this until he can neither turn nor move forward; then a strong bar is fastened behind his neck, so that he is entirely disabled, his head alone appearing above the level of the ground. The horns, having been cut off, are carefully dried and sent to China, where they are sold at high prices. An average head fetches from 100 to 120 roubles (£10 to £12), at fifteen roubles per pound. Our host told us that the largest sum obtained for one pair of horns was 180 roubles. Naturally such a price being a fortune for a wretched Kalmuk, the Maral is becoming exterminated in the Altai, and lately the Government has been taking strong measures for the preservation of this magnificent animal by strictly prohibiting its being shot in the district. Unfortunately the means of enforcing this law are very limited owing to the want of a sufficient number of officials, and the wide extent of this animal's range. As will appear later, we

spent three weeks in search of it. Littledale saw only one fine stag during the whole time he was in the country, and I only came across two hinds and a couple of young stags.

In China they crush the horns into powder, which is used as a medicine, mostly for women's diseases, and I have been told that in rich Chinese families there is scarcely any dowry that does not contain "maral-horn powder." On our return journey we met several caravans of this precious substance, and our host himself had often been to Kobdo and Uliassoutai with many pony loads of horns, the latter towns being well-known markets for them. A Maral park is a most profitable enterprise, entailing very little expense. A tract of ground bought or rented from the village at a low price, and the cost of a wooden fence, represent all the capital one has to put into the business.

We spent the night at Shebalina, and started at 6 a.m. next morning for Ongudai. We were glad to hear from the merchant that the road was good, a statement which proved to be correct, and that the ninety remaining versts would bring us early that same evening to Ongudai.

Shortly after leaving the village we came to a very steep ascent, but luckily it proved to be as short

as it was steep, and the horses carried us over smartly. This was our last difficult pass, and the road now led through a flat plateau with hills on both sides. About thirty versts before reaching our destination we entered the Kalmuk country. At one of the last stations we were met by a deputation of "pig-tailed" Kalmuks, who produced a written order from the Ispravnik of Bisk to the local "dutchina" (Kalmuk community) to give me every assistance as regards shooting. They had accordingly prepared a programme for the day: Roe-deer drives in the morning, and fishing in the Tenga lake in the afternoon. I thanked them, through our Ispravnik, for the trouble they had taken; but being anxious to reach Ongudai, told them I would probably take advantage of their proposals on my return journey. The Kalmuks are a very hospitable race. Their numbers, as I was told, are gradually decreasing in the Altai, where, according to statistics, only six or seven thousand remain. They are at a very low ebb of civilisation, and worship spirits. Like Mongols and Chinese, they shave their heads and wear pig-tails. Those that have been christened by Russian missionaries carry the usual head-dress. On the whole, they are very indifferent to religion, and in many cases some members of a family are converts

to the Greek Church, while the others remain heathen, such division creating no misunderstandings whatever amongst them. They are mostly nomads



KALMUKS.

and live in "yourts," or felt-covered tents, with wicker frames, which they shift from place to place according to the time of year and the abundance of grass available for their cattle. As regards their intelli-

gence, I can only say that I found them a good deal inferior to the Kirghiz, who are usually clever and cunning. The Kirghiz being Mohammedans, this difference of religion may have contributed to this result. The Kalmuks are governed by Zaissans, or elected native chiefs (formerly hereditary chiefs of tribes), who are responsible before the Government for the periodical collection of taxes. Each Zaissan rules over several "dutchinas," or communes, each of whom in turn has a demitcha at the head of affairs. The "dutchinas," or communes, have to keep at their own expense a Russian official, or clerk, who acts as secretary, and writes in Russian all the necessary papers for the "dutchina." This clerk gradually takes the whole of the commune into his hands. Being entirely uncontrolled, he writes whatever he chooses, and becomes *ipso facto* a petty tyrant to the wretched Kalmuks, who live in constant fear of him, and make him presents to avert his wrath.

The Government official lives at Ongudai, and is called Altaisky Zassedatel. At the time of our visit this important post was held by a Mr. Meyer, who seemed a very energetic gentleman. He accompanied us to the Siberian frontier, and proved most useful in procuring horses for us at Kosh-

Agatch, and sending us provisions from Ongudai. The Kalmuks dress in a very peculiar manner; they wear, winter and summer, a large sheepskin coat



KALMUK ZAISSAN.

confined round the body by a leather strap; in summer they let the upper part of it drop, thus going about naked to the waist. Rich Kalmuks wear a soft shirt underneath. A fur cap is their ordinary

headgear, and long boots of soft leather, often of a bright red colour, constitute their footgear. Some Kalmuks are comparatively wealthy and own several thousand horses. They feed on "koumiss," or fermented mare's milk, from which also they distil a feeble alcoholic beverage. Their language seemed to me to resemble the Turki dialect, though a great many words have nothing in common with the latter. Thus good and bad is *Iakshì* and *Iamàn*; water, *sou*; white and black, *ak* and *kara*; rock, *tash*; but, on the other hand, wind is *salkhyn*; big horn, *jahn müss*, which differs from the equivalent terms in Turki. The name which the Kalmuks apply to a wild ram (*Kotchkor*) bears no resemblance to the Kirghiz *Gultcha*, but the ewes are known in both languages as *Arkhar*. Thus the two dialects seem here and there to fuse.

A few versts before reaching Ongudai we passed the Tenga lake and saw a great many Cranes, Ducks, and Brahminy Geese on the marshes round it. Our Ispravnik told us at the station where we halted that once, when a police official in the district, he had been assaulted by 500 Kalmuks, and had to seek refuge from them in a boat on this very lake. The reason of this was that he had been given orders to announce to the

Kalmuks a decree augmenting Government taxes. This news was so unwelcome, and had rendered them so furious, that they would have killed him if he had not succeeded in escaping to Bisk.

The ground as we proceeded became sandy and barren; on either side of the road, which was now in good order, were the same low hills covered with larch and cedar woods, the latter being priceless for the inhabitants, who, in autumn, gather large quantities of cedar nuts and sell them to merchants who come for that purpose.

On our way back we found most of the villages empty, everyone being "in the cedars," as the few peasants we met told us. At 4 p.m. we reached Ongudai and found the Littledales in fairly good quarters. As for us, rooms had been prepared in a house belonging to a christened Kalmuk. The baggage had arrived safely with Joseph and the cook, and our next step was to secure ponies, saddle-bags, and stores, such as potatoes, for sugar and flour had been bought at Barnaoul. Here the road ended, and henceforward everything had to be carried on horseback.

Ongudai is a small village, surrounded on all sides by hills, somewhat higher than those we had passed on our way, and inhabited by a few Russian

officials, merchants, and converted Kalmuks. Here I made acquaintance with Mr. Meyer, the chief police official of the district. He told us that horses would be ready on the following day, which was spent entirely in inspecting the ponies and dividing the packages in one month's stores, as we intended to



THE LAST STATION.

leave the remaining supplies at Kosh-Agatch, sending Joseph for them when needed. We also hired, for three roubles a pair, from the natives a large number of leather saddle-bags, into which we placed our provisions. The ponies were carefully picked, especially our "mounts," and the start was fixed for the morning of the following day, June 8th.



ALTAI SCENERY.

In the evening we received a visit from the local priest, Father Constantine. He had spent about thirty years at Ongudai and in the Kalmuk country, having been exiled to this place in his early days for some political offence. He was most interesting in his conversation, having thoroughly studied the Kalmuks, their language and ways, and having converted many to Christianity. He gave me a Russian-Kalmuk dictionary which he had compiled himself, and from which I extracted my available means of conversation. He had crowned his studies by marrying a Kalmuk girl, and was spending the few years that were left to him in educating his wife and father-in-law, who lived in his house.

The same evening we secured the services, for twenty roubles a month, of a Russian, Nicholas by name, who was to act as interpreter, and whom we found useful in every emergency. A distance of over 200 miles separated us yet from the Siberian frontier—a distance which we covered in six days. We started from Ongudai at 9 a.m. on the 8th of June, on horseback. The ladies drove about twelve miles in a cart, after which they also had to mount the ponies which had been prepared for them. Everyone said it would be impossible for ladies' saddles to pass along the narrow Tchouia path, where

the native women ride astride like men. We risked it, however, and found it much easier than we anticipated. The weather had become quite settled again. Our caravan consisted of fifty pack and ten mount ponies. Mr. Meyer accompanied us to the frontier. Our first march (about thirty-five versts) brought us about 4 p.m. to the banks of the river Katoun, where we camped for the first time. The current was very strong here, especially in June, and the river fairly broad. On our way we met several stray Kalmuk "yourts." The sun was exceedingly hot, and clouds of dust covered us as we trotted along the path. We followed for some time the Urusoul River, on which stands Ongudai. The aspect of the country presented no perceptible change, and appeared to us somewhat monotonous: the same rolling hills, the same vegetation, the same trees, giving evidence of occasional forest fires, probably caused by the carelessness of the Kalmuks. Our tents were soon pitched on a grassy plain overlooking the Katoun. A "yourt" had been put up for our friends, M. Meyer and the Ispravnik, who both partook of our frugal supper from the hands of Vassili, our cook. The night was fresh, and it was freezing when we started next morning.

Towards 6 a.m. we crossed the Katoun with our

luggage on a raft. As for the ponies, they were pushed into the river, and made to swim across. It was a curious sight to watch them paddling away in mid-stream and landing on the opposite side about 200 yards lower down. In the water they look twice as long, with their tails floating on the surface behind



CROSSING THE KATOUN.

them. This operation presented no difficulty, however, and it took hardly an hour to reload the ponies and make a fresh start. We followed the river up its right bank for some time, and here first made acquaintance with the so-called "bomas," the dangers of which had been so much exaggerated. This curious term signifies a place where the path becomes

narrow and leads over steep rocks overhanging the stream. Our ponies seemed to be well accustomed to this sort of climbing, and carried us through without the slightest hitch; as for the ladies, they did not even dismount. We soon turned off to our left and began ascending a long steep slope leading to the Saldjar pass (5,500 feet), from which we would be able to distinguish the higher mountains in the distance. At 1 p.m. we reached the "saddle," and a beautiful view met our eyes. Snow-clad peaks about a hundred miles off raised their lofty heads against the light blue sky. The horizon was cloudless. To our right stood the grand, massive, snowy-white Bialukha range, the highest in the Siberian Altai, with glaciers streaming down its sides; we could just distinguish them with the help of our glasses. To the left appeared the Kurai hills, likewise buried beneath eternal snow, below which flows the Tchouia, and close to which lay our way to Kosh-Agatch. Here we halted for some time, in order to let the ponies rest. Round us were scattered innumerable Alpine flowers and rhododendrons, to which were tied bits of white and red ribbons. On my inquiring the meaning of this, I was told that this was the manner in which Kalmuks honour and sacrifice to local spirits; we afterwards found similar



SALDJAR PASS.



ribbons on almost every pass we crossed. A steep descent awaited us. The heat was intolerable, and the slow pace at which we were obliged to advance was very trying. At 4 p.m. we reached the banks of the river Inia, a small tributary of the Katoun, where we pitched camp after a thirty-verst march.



KALMUKS BETWEEN ONGUDAI AND KOSH-AGATCH.

Here we first came across Kalmuk offerings to their gods. Two or three poles were put up in the middle of a field, in a slanting position from the ground; at the end of these poles hung skins of horses and goats; the wretched animals had been torn to pieces alive as a peace offering to the spirits. After two trees are hewn down the animal is tied, his fore feet to one and hind legs to the other, and the trees are

released. It was, indeed, a ghastly sight. Towards evening the wind began blowing, and waving the legs of the skins to and fro, gave them an appearance of dancing at the end of long poles.

Early next morning we lifted camp, reaching the



KALMUK OFFERINGS TO GODS.

junction of the Tchouia River and the Katoun at about 10 a.m. We branched off up the former river, which we now had to follow to Kosh-Agatch. As we advanced, the country gradually grew wilder; here and there the river ran through narrow gorges, and the path became more difficult for the horses.



"AS WE ADVANCED, THE COUNTRY GREW WILDER."

There were no more signs of villages; only a few "yourts" witnessed the presence of human beings, and the occupants of these were so frightened at the sight of us that they would rush off and hide under the rocks until our caravan had passed. At



"WAVING THE LEGS OF THE SKINS TO AND FRO."

4 p.m. we reached a place called Iodro, on the banks of the Tchouia, where we camped for the night, the ponies having had a march of forty versts. Here the Ispravnik promised us a curious sight. He sent for a Kalmuk priest who lived in his yourt in the neighbourhood, and on the latter's

arrival with his officiating implements, ordered him to perform before us. Kalmuks are greatly under the influence of their priests or "kaams," who are supposed to live in close communion with spirits whom they invoke, and through whose power they receive the gift of prophecy. The invocation or "Kamlanie" which we witnessed that evening, as



KALMUK "YOURT."

we sat in a circle round the kaam, consisted of the following strange display. The priest knelt down, holding up a tambourine on which was roughly carved in wood a diabolical figure, representing the spirit he usually invoked; from this instrument depended a quantity of coloured ribbons, similar to those we saw attached to bushes and odd-shaped trees. When wishful to consult a spirit the Kalmuks generally attach a bit of ribbon to

the kaam's tambourine, who then begins his performance, ending in his announcing an order from the god to give him a horse, cow, or goat, according as a particular animal in the Kalmuk's possession has taken his fancy. This is supposed to appease the spirit's wrath. Such is the constant deception to which the wretched natives are subjected. It was a strange sight to see the man beating his tambourine, slowly at first, uttering incomprehensible and savage sounds into the spirit's ear, then louder and louder till he got into a state of ecstasy, under the magic spell of his familiar deity. Finally, he gave a loud yell, and I was told that the spirit was ready to answer my questions. I asked (of course through the interpreter) whether I should kill many wild sheep; the reply came, in a hollow voice, that a "Kotchkor" (wild sheep) with white patches on him would be hurled down a precipice. I took this as a good omen, and rewarded the old rascal with a couple of roubles. Mr. Meyer told me that a few years ago there were two well-known rival kaams in the district, and that they once quarrelled on the question whose spirit was the stronger. Both began invoking their god in the manner just described. It was said to have been an exciting scene, for they reached such

a pitch of exaltation after a few hours that one of them fell senseless to the ground, and died shortly afterwards. The other kaam was thereupon regarded as the conqueror, and crowds of Kalmuks used to throng round his "yourt" to consult his spirit. Kalmuks do not bury their dead, but place the corpse on wooden planks strewn with branches, where it is left at the disposal of vultures and other animals of prey. Mongols consider it a profanation of the soil to bury their dead, and simply leave them on the spot where they died; they do not even allow bodies of Russian merchants who happen to die in Mongolia to be buried, but sometimes remove the corpse into Russian territory. The Government has lately taken measures to prevent this in the Altai, as well as the inhuman treatment of animals; but these ancient customs still prevail in the remoter parts of the country.

We spent the whole of the following day (June 11th) in marching up the valley of the Tchouia, whose muddy waters flowed rapidly beneath us. Here also we had to pass frequent "bomas," which rather delayed our journey, ponies refusing at places to advance over the steep craggy path. We managed, however, to reach our destination that night, after having covered another fifty versts, and camped by



PASSING A "BOMA."

the side of a small tributary of the Tchouia, the Tchibit. Here the scenery changed as we neared the Kosh-Agatch plateau. The mountains grew loftier on either side, and we could plainly distinguish snowy peaks in the distance.

Next day we made our customary start at 5 a.m.



UP THE VALLEY OF THE TCHOUIA.

The weather was much cooler, owing, probably, to greater altitude. We now passed the "Kurai steppe," a plateau of about twelve miles in length, bordered on our right hand by the Kurai snow-clad range (*Kuraiskie belki*), which we had seen for the first time from the crest of the Saldjar pass. The mighty crags reared their lofty heads in the sky

just above us, as we followed, for several hours, the path at their foot. That day I nearly fell a victim to my vicious Kalmuk pony. As I was dismounting, in order to tighten the girths of my saddle, the horse suddenly kicked and bolted. I was unable to disengage my foot from the stirrup, owing to my nailed boots, and was dragged along in the most awkward position some fifty yards, when the brute luckily stopped. I got out of this with severe bruises on head and arms.

We reached Kouickhtonar, the last camp before Kosh-Agatch, towards 6 p.m., after a march of sixty versts, or about forty-five miles. High mountains surrounded us on all sides, and the Kalmuks all asserted that there were many "bouns," *i.e.* Ibex (*Capra sibirica*), in these hills. As we were chiefly anxious, however, to make acquaintance with the Wild Sheep, we decided to try for Ibex on our return journey.

At 7 a.m. on June 13th we were again on the move, and towards noon entered at last the Kosh-Agatch plateau. The plateau is a wide steppe, a little under 6,000 feet above the level of the sea, stretching about sixty versts in length by forty in width, bordered on all sides by fairly high mountains, especially to the south and west. The river

Tchouia flows through it together with several of its smaller tributaries, of which the Tchagan-Burgaza is the largest. Numerous lakes, ponds, and marshes are scattered about on the steppe, and afford good breeding-places for Swans, Geese, and Ducks of all



KOSH-AGATCH PLATEAU.

kinds which swarmed there. It was here that I thought I might get a chance to secure the duck which Mr. Alpheraki was so eager to obtain. The birds seemed very tame, and we passed quite close to several lots. A couple of Swans only swam away a few yards at our approach. The steppe over which we were now advancing had probably been one huge

lake in former days ; a well-defined line along the surrounding hills some hundreds of feet above its level seemed to be the ancient watermark, and appeared to confirm this supposition. In fact, almost all the mountains round Mongolian and Tibetan plateaus bear this mark at different heights, denoting the gradual drying-up of these regions. The ground was sandy and barren with patches of alkali here and there, and grass scarce, affording poor grazing for the ponies.

One could distinguish from afar the beds of streams by the greener grass and a few shrubs growing beside them. We now had a good view of the hills to the south, where we expected to find the glorious Wild Sheep, and were told that a couple of days from Kosh-Agatch would bring us to the Promised Land. At 2 p.m. we found ourselves opposite the few wooden huts which were to be our destination, but the Tchouia had to be crossed ; so near and yet so far, as there was no sign of a boat. The river was broad, and no ford existed for miles above, especially at this season of the year, when rivers are generally swollen by melting snows. Strange to say, Russian merchants have not yet attempted to build a bridge at this place, though tea caravans are becoming more and more frequent.

Owing to this want of bridges, goods are often carried away and lost in the river. A small raft was soon ready, the Ispravnik having warned us of the difficulty, and sent orders in front to bring down to the river all the timber that could be found. Our crossing was effected without accident. As for the luggage, it was brought in late in the evening, thoroughly damped. The village consists of a few wooden buildings used as shelter for goods, of two or three houses, one of which was inhabited by a Russian Customs official, and of a small missionary church. We were put up in a fair room. Weather cold and rainy. The whole of the next day was spent in drying our baggage and stores. The custom-house yard presented a curious sight. It was strewn all over with our wet clothes, bedding, rope, flour, potatoes, salt—everything drying in the sun, which luckily peeped out at the right moment. Here we made acquaintance with the Zaissan Semion, an energetic Kalmuk chief, who had been summoned by Mr. Meyer in order to superintend our expedition in procuring for us the best horses he could muster in the country, and the most reliable men. He was a christened native, and a great deal above the average of Kalmuk intelligence. As I have said before, the Zaissan, the elected chief of a tribe, is

almost omnipotent in his district, and generally rules over his subjects in a most arbitrary fashion, Government control amounting to very little, and the inhabitants being at the lowest possible degree of civilisation, if such it may be called.

We were several times witnesses of punishments inflicted on Kalmuks by the Zaisan's orders for slight



CATCHING HORSES.

attempts at disobedience, and occasionally had to put a stop to them. The usual mode of punishment consists in flogging the wretched culprit in a most merciless way, till he sometimes loses consciousness. We happened to be present at a milder example of this performance on the following day, when the Zaisan found one of the Kalmuks not helping to catch the ponies for the start. He followed him on horseback

some hundred yards, beating him as hard as he could with his knotted whip. In the afternoon we sent for the hunters. Four dismal creatures presented themselves, stating they were willing to accompany us, and that they knew the ground up to the frontier. We kept hearing the words "*Kotchkor bar*," which our interpreter translated "There are wild sheep." Tabá was one of the four men. I was very anxious to secure him, having been told that Major Cumberland had employed him the previous year, and had found him exceedingly useful. We certainly all



PUNISHING A KALMUK.

agreed that he was by far the keenest and cleverest of them all. Poor little fellow, I have lately heard that he died soon after we left. He was as sharp as a monkey, and kept urging us to take him to Europe, where I am afraid he would have become



THE START FROM KOSH-AGATCH.

a dreadful scoundrel, though in his own sphere he was well enough, and at times witty and amusing. He spoke a few words of English, which he used to pronounce with his native accent, and nothing was more funny than to hear him go through his short vocabulary of the Anglo-Saxon dialect. Towards

evening Littledale and I went out after ducks, and brought back half a dozen Eared Grebes and a couple of Geese. There were said to be Antelopes (*A. gutturosa*) on the steppe, but we saw none. On our way back, however, we came across large herds, and shot a few. We settled for the prices with our friend the Zaissan, allowing each man a rouble a day with the promise of a small present at the end of the journey. As for the ponies, we agreed at the rate of 100 roubles for ten horses a month. They all seemed quite content with this bargain, and we decided to set forth on the following morning, Zaissan Semion accompanying us to our first shooting camp at two days' march from Kosh-Agatch.



CHAPTER III.

Start from Kosh-Agatch—Steppe—Camp—Up Tchagan-Burgaza Valley
—First sight of Wild Sheep—Kotchkor—Arkhar—Snow Bridge
—Pitching Camp—First Shooting Camp—Kalmuk Vocabulary—
Cold Nights—Stalks—The Happy Valley (*Bain-Tchagan*)—More
Stalks—Snow and Wind.

HAVING concluded all our preparations at Kosh-Agatch, dried our baggage, and placed two months' stores under lock and key in the Customs warehouse (taking with us provisions for a month), we started at noon on June 15th. Early that morning the place presented an unusual sight. Our Kalmuks, presided over by the Zaissan, began catching the horses, which were quartered in a large wooded enclosure, with lassos, Littledale and myself picking out those we considered the best. Although the natives were skilful enough in the art of lassoing, this job took a couple of hours, numerous misses being scored, and after a miss the ponies having to be driven round

again into the fatal corner, when the deadly noose was to be hurled round the neck of the one we had pointed out. Our baggage, ready to be loaded, was scattered about on the ground round the enclosure, and as soon as a horse was caught he was instantly hobbled and converted into a pack-pony. Many refused energetically this degrading work, and began jumping and kicking for all they were worth till they got rid of their unaccustomed burden. Renewed trials often brought similar results, and the horse had to be abandoned. All this delayed our departure until midday, when at last success crowned our efforts. I must acknowledge that the very process of loading seemed to be familiar to the Kalmuks, and was carried through in a masterly way. Our interpreter, Nicholas, was also thoroughly acquainted with the job, probably owing to his practice with the numerous caravans which pass through the country. I was struck by this, in comparison with previous experiences in other regions, the Caucasus, for instance, where the art of loading a horse for a long march and economising rope is far inferior.

We bade farewell to the Ispravnik and Mr. Meyer, who both kept urging us not to cross the Mongolian frontier, where, we were assured, our escort would refuse to follow us, and began advancing slowly to-

wards the hills due south. Our caravan consisted of our four selves (the Littledales, my wife, and myself), Dr. Newsky, Cristo and Gabriel, Vassili the cook, Joseph Abbas, and Nicholas the interpreter, fifty pack and mount ponies, ten Kalmuks with a *demitcha*



LOADING A HORSE.

at their head, our four hunters, and the Zaissan Semion. This was, indeed, an imposing party, more likely to be destined for the conquest of China than for shooting sheep. It was with sore hearts that we gradually saw our numbers growing to such an extent, but everyone seemed to be wanted, and we had to

put up with it. Our way lay through the flat steppe for about twenty miles, and, having started so late in the day, we decided to pitch camp at the foot of the hills. The sun was very warm, the ground dry and barren. We passed several small lakes, and soon found ourselves on the banks of the Tchagan-Burgaza stream, which we followed up till the evening. I was greatly struck by how one is deceived by distances on those plateaus. The hills seemed quite close at hand, and I could hardly believe that twenty miles separated us from them. However, as we took about five hours to reach our destination, at the pace of about four miles an hour, there could be no mistake. We camped that night on the riverside, at a spot where the stream flows out of a narrow valley, at the head of which we could distinguish snowy peaks. Our Zaissan had brought his tent with him, and we were interested in watching the way in which he kept ordering his Kalmuks about, to pitch his tent, prepare his food, etc., as he lay quietly on his back indulging in pleasant dreams, or sweet slumber. In fact, they paid much more attention to him than they did to us, and I must own that we sincerely hoped he would return home as soon as possible, which he luckily did, though he had been appointed to accompany us the whole

journey. It was in a welcome mood that we met him next evening, as he explained to us that official duties required his presence in his own district, and that he would join us on our way back. He promised to supply us every month with fresh ponies and men, to which we readily agreed, especially with regard to ponies, which, being unshod, would soon become footsore with constant travelling over rocky ground, and so be useless for our purpose.

Yakoub, the *demitcha*, who was practically our *caravan-bashi*, was a kind-hearted Kalmuk, rather too weak to keep the men in good order and discipline. He explained to us that it was most risky to cross the frontier into Mongolia, and that our staff would, in that case, strongly object and possibly desert us. We thought he, too, was distinctly opposed to quitting "his happy home," and left the question open for the present. Early on the following morning, June 16th, we struck camp and entered the valley of the Tchagan-Burgaza. The slopes on either side grew steeper as we advanced, and the ground barer. Here and there were to be seen occasional clumps of fir trees, principally larch, and by the river-bed rows of willow bushes. The path led along the right bank of the stream, now and then ascending the rocks and affording a heavy pull

to the pack-ponies, at other times descending to the very bottom of the valley. As we came to higher ground we found the slopes covered with fine grass, resembling Alpine pastures, and fauna similar to that of the Alps, as far as I could judge. Here also we came across horns and skulls of Wild Sheep scattered about on the bed of the stream. Some of them measured well, and made our hearts leap as we entered at last the *Ovis* country. In fact, Tabá seemed to assure us that we would see a herd or two on the slopes before evening. Towards 3 p.m. we caught sight with our glasses of some specks just below a high ridge on the opposite side. We made them out to be ewes and young sheep quietly grazing. There was an unusual movement among the Kalmuks, who began pointing at the herd, and the words *Kotchkor* and *Arkhar* predominated in their lively conversation. As we came nearer the light grey specks became more conspicuous. They soon discovered our caravan; all the heads were up in a second, and a moment after the whole herd trotted over the ridge. Unlike their Sardinian kinsmen, the ewes carried horns from ten to twelve inches long, and their bodies were of course much larger. We were very anxious to see the rams, but unfortunately no other animals came in sight that day.

We passed many more horns lying on the ground, some of which taped over fifty inches along the curve and over eighteen in girth, and great were our expectations for the morrow. At a place where the path turned to the right we were obliged to cross the stream over a large snow-bridge, which was now melting fast. We could see the swollen river rushing furiously underneath and gradually wearing away the whole fabric. It was a dangerous crossing. Luckily, the snow was just strong enough to carry the weight of the ponies, and we all got over safely. The next day a Kalmuk, who had been sent back for fuel, found the bridge gone, and no more signs of snow. A little beyond this spot the river made a sharp turn westwards, and we now followed up its left bank for a few miles till we reached a suitable camping place, which, our hunters said, was to be the centre of our shooting operations, and pitched our tents at a few hundred yards from the stream, after a twenty-five mile march. From here the country presented a totally different aspect to what we had seen before. We were camped on a small grassy tableland, surrounded on all sides by hills. The valley of the Tchagan-Burgaza here made a bend southwards and continued for a few miles to the sources of the stream, enclosed between two craggy ridges, on which a good

deal of snow was still left. A small torrent flowed down from westwards close by our tents, whilst steep rocks of a reddish hue closed in behind us from the north. Eastwards flowed the main stream, effecting its junction, a couple of miles down, with its tributary



A SNOW-BRIDGE.

the Bain-Tchagan, the latter flowing through a large valley, with fine rocks and grassy slopes, which we christened later on "The Happy Valley," on account of the sport we obtained there; the saddle at the head of this valley was the Russo-Chinese divide. Opposite our camp stood fairly high rolling hills,

which formed a marshy plateau, over which we used to ride on our way to the "happy valley." The ground was stony and barren, with patches of grass here and there, and no trees were to be seen anywhere. One could not imagine a more favourable country for the haunts of the glorious sheep, though our actual camping ground might have been better chosen. Its altitude, according to my aneroid, was 7,800 feet above sea-level. The only fuel we could get was *Tezek*, dry horsedung, which henceforward was our main resource, and which our Kalmuks used to gather all day and bring back in the large leather bags we had hired at Ongudai.

We had taken a "yourt" with us, which was placed at poor Vassili's disposal for the kitchen and his cooking utensils. I must own his task was not an easy one, though he never grumbled once, or showed any sign of dissatisfaction. The weather was cloudless, and towards evening the thermometer descended below freezing point. That night I slept badly. Visions of sheep kept constantly hovering round me, and I was wide awake when Cristo came into our tent at 3 a.m., as we had decided to start as early as possible on our first field-day, hoping, if fortune favoured, to find and stalk the rams while they were enjoying their morning grass.

After a frugal breakfast, consisting of porridge and bacon, we drew lots, Littledale and I. Fortune gave me the eastern side towards the Chinese frontier, whilst Littledale got the ground north and west of camp. We divided the hunters between us, each of us taking two of them in order to try their capacities,



OUR KITCHEN.

and see if they would answer their purpose. I had scribbled down on a piece of paper a hundred of the most necessary Kalmuk words, so as to be able to converse with my two companions, and very soon got on friendly terms with them. It was still chilly when we started, but from the look of the sky we were entitled to expect a fine day. We crossed the

river, quite shallow here, on horseback, and rode some way down the stream, striking off to the right at its junction with the Bain-Tchagan, and following up the latter. Many old heads lay about on the river-bed, betraying at least former presence of "Kotchkor." We came across quantities of Hares and Marmots, which kept darting off in front of us as we passed like shadows in the morning twilight. No sound was to be heard save, now and then, the shrill whistle of a Marmot regaining its hole.

The Promised Land at last! It was with throbbing heart that I repeated to myself those two magic words, though I still felt rather sceptical as to the presence of old rams on the rolling hillocks, which I could now plainly distinguish before us. We must cross over into Mongolia, thought I, where hills are higher, and the country wilder, to find the old patriarch's haunts; but my hunters seemed to be confident of success, for they kept saying, "Kotchkor bar" ("There are sheep"). Moreover, Joseph, who was our principal guide, confirmed the statement that Cumberland had found sheep in the vicinity of camp, and had not considered it worth while to cross the frontier at all. Fortunately I was soon to be mistaken.

After a couple of hours' ride I discovered a herd

of ewes and young ones feeding on the slopes to my right. They were about fifty in number, quietly grazing uphill. We immediately dismounted, and having hobbled the ponies, left them round a corner on the river-bed. Here began a steep ascent for us. Keeping well out of sight of the herd, we made for a boulder above us, from which I could command a good view of the country. Just before reaching the top, as I peeped cautiously over a ridge, my glass showed me two or three specks on the opposite side of a wide ravine, and in a second I made them out to be rams. Hurrah! Kotchkor! I shall never forget this first acquaintance with the grand Altai sheep as long as I live. Although they had large, strong bodies, the horns seemed to be their main bulk, and every part of the beasts seemed to be concentrated in the mighty heads they carried. They were feeding slowly away, now and then lifting up suddenly their massive sweeping horns, as if conscious of impending danger, or was it to evoke admiration and respect of other animals by their commanding beauty and strength? Then they would feed again, entirely unsuspecting, showing their dark grey coats, with patches of longer winter clothing on their backs and withers, their lighter coloured rumps, Roman nose, and legs. For some time I was lost in con-

temptation, till one of my Kalmuks, who had squatted down behind me, touched my arm and whispered, "Adar kotchkor" ("Kill sheep"). This reminded me of my object, and I decided to get above them as quickly as possible, and wait till they fed into favourable ground.

The wind appeared to be steady, so, leaving my hunters, I started back in a crouching position, and in an hour's fast walking got round to a place which I thought was about 300 yards above the slope where I had located the sheep. Here I advanced with the utmost precaution, expecting to see my coveted prey at every moment. But, alas! there was no sign of my animals. I began to think that they had discovered either my men or myself, when on reaching a ridge overlooking a narrow transversal gully there they stood, the grand old fellows, within 120 yards in front of me, half-way up the slope. Off went my "Purdey" at the largest, which staggered, and, recovering instantly, made off, followed by a dozen others I had failed to see before, and which jumped up like lightning. Again I fired at another, and distinctly heard the fatal thud of my bullet into flesh. They all disappeared, however, making me feel dismally low. Reloading my rifle I was off in a second at their heels, or rather some hundreds of

yards behind, their pace equalling that of the "Flying Scotchman." Luckily for me several long snow-patches lay across the slanting hillsides in the direction they had taken, and this enabled me to follow up their tracks for a good mile, till I reached a steep, rocky nullah, which, according to my observations, they must have crossed. At its bottom flowed a precipitous torrent into the Bain-Tchagan, whose bed I could distinguish a long way below me. I was now fairly done, and sat down to spy the opposite side. A faint hope of finding my wounded rams in the ravine still remained, as I had come across two distinct blood-tracks on my way. On looking up there I saw the herd about a mile above me, standing motionless on the skyline, but, to my great disappointment, saw no staggerers behind! My only chance was now to inspect carefully the whole of the intervening ground and every corner of the nullah. For a good half-hour I peered into every recess, spied every ledge of rock on the opposite side, but without result, till I finally found a blood-stained stone, and following with my glass the probable direction which the ram must have taken, there I spotted him lying, very sick, on a cornice just above the bottom of the stream. "He is mine now," thought I, as I

scrambled noiselessly down amongst the crags ; but my troubles were not yet over, for as I reached a steep descent with rolling stones one of these lost its balance and went crashing down the hill. To my great disgust I saw the ram slowly get up, look round two or three times, and walk away. I was too far to shoot, so, making up my mind, I darted down the slope as hard as I could tear, filling my boots with earth and stones, and hoping to get within range of the animal before he would be out of sight. A few minutes brought me to the place where he had lain down. I now found he had crossed the stream, and was making his way up the opposite side at a steady pace, which he had probably increased owing to the noise I made in my desperate rush. He was about 200 yards from me in a straight line, and I saw that all would be over if I did not take my chance then and there ; so, placing myself in a comfortable position, and putting up the 200 yards sight, I took a long aim and, confident in my "Purdey," fired. The bullet told, and down he rolled to the very bed of the stream, stone dead. As I was on my way to have a look at my well-earned prize I was startled by shouts from above. There were my two Kalmuks standing on the ridge I had just left, waving their caps

frantically, and pointing in the direction to their right. I thought at first that this was their manner of congratulating me, and that they had witnessed all my proceedings, especially as I could not understand a word they uttered. As they continued, however, this wild mode of telegraphy, I began to think of my other wounded beast, and on looking in the direction they indicated, there, like a statue, stood a beautiful old ram on an overhanging ledge of rock. He had evidently discovered me, for he kept staring intently down on the place where I stood; then he would turn his head up slowly and watch the hunters. There was no possible hiding, so I simply followed up the bottom of the nullah within full sight of the animal, which, curiously enough, never moved an inch till I got within 150 yards of him, and, taking a steady aim, shot him through the heart. He also rolled down the cliffs and stuck on a crag, from which I dragged him down by his horns. I immediately saw he was the largest of the two. My first bullet had shattered his hind-quarters to pieces, and he had probably been bleeding so hard that he had no more strength to move. The measurements of the two heads were the following:—

	Length along curve.			Girth.	Tip to tip.	
Inches	.	52	...	19	...	39
"	.	49½	...	18½	...	33½

My two hunters came down presently, and seemed to be greatly rejoiced at the day's success. They kept saying "Jakshi" ("Well done"), "Jahn Müss" ("large horn"), and engaged in a wild conversation between each other, which I was at a loss to understand. I could hardly judge of their hunting capacities by this first experience, though I was now able to assert that they both possessed good eyesight. We sat down to lunch close by the stream, after having dragged the two dead sheep to a comfortable spot. Their size was about that of a Scotch red-deer hind, and I should say they measured nearly four feet at the shoulders. Their coats were of a darkish brown colour, with patches of long thick hair, darker than the rest—remains of their winter coating. Their legs and rumps were of a lighter colour, and, as we goralocked them, I found they were exceedingly lean. We left the bodies, taking only the heads and skins with us, which my Kalmuks tied to their saddles, intending to send back later on for the meat. It was a difficult scramble down for the ponies, which one of the men had gone to fetch and had recklessly brought down, the stones at the bottom of the gully rolling away at every moment from under their feet.

When we reached the main stream below, we found

ourselves at the entrance of a beautiful valley, enclosed between steep grassy slopes and rocky pinnacles above, bearing every quality of sheep ground. Out of it flowed the Bain-Tchagan River. At the very entrance of this valley stood several lower buttress-like hillocks, which seemed to afford capital stalking ground. At the head of it, a few miles off, I could just discern a fairly high pass, which, as my hunters told me, was on the very frontier of Mongolia. This was the "Happy Valley" I have before mentioned. Later on neither Littledale nor myself hardly ever returned from the place empty-handed. Seeing no more signs of sheep, I decided to return to camp, though it was only about midday, but quite satisfied with my first day's work. We followed down the stream to the spot where we had left the horses, and covering the same ground as in the morning, reached the tents towards 2 p.m. Here the ladies welcomed us heartily, as they caught sight of my trophies. Littledale soon came in with Taba and his other hunter from the opposite direction, and what was our amazement when we saw five heads hung to their saddles! We had evidently struck a golden vein. Two of his trophies measured well. He had come across a large herd of rams who had failed to locate the first shot, and had thus afforded

him several chances of which he had availed himself. Seven animals the first day seemed promising for the future, and merry was our dinner that night as we gave the ladies an account of our experiences. We had both found the sheep at an altitude of about 9,000 feet, and had each only seen one lot of rams, though probabilities were great that the surrounding country was a favourite resort of theirs. We decided to acquire a thorough knowledge of our ground before crossing into Mongolia, and started on the following morning, June 18th, at 3 a.m., Littledale going in the direction westwards, where a long valley, with steep crags on either side, led towards the Tarkhaty River, whilst I was to follow up the main Tchagan-Burgaza stream from camp to its sources. It was still pitch dark when we mounted our steeds, but the sky was again cloudless, and there was every prospect of fine weather. We crossed the river, my hunters and I, and trotting along up the bed of the stream for a good hour, soon began spying both sides. On our way we saw several pairs of Brahminy Geese, which we startled out of the rocks where they were breeding. Animal life seemed very scarce. Two or three Eagles soared over our heads, and it was only towards 6 a.m. that I saw a herd of four ewes feeding

on the slopes above us to our left. Further on another herd of twenty head came in view, but again they were ewes and young ones. At noon we had not found a single ram, clouds were gathering



OUR FIRST DAY'S BAG.

fast from the west, and a strong wind began blowing. We could see the snow get up and turn in whirlwinds on the tops, and Taba, who accompanied me, seemed to think that there was no good to be done that day. We went on, however, spying carefully, and reached the sources of the river. The

country was wild and desolate. Now and then we would come across fine pasture grounds with rich grass, such as one meets on the Pamir steppes, and dark green patches here and there denoting marshy grounds, which our ponies would persistently avoid. Fine rocks suggestive of Ibex now stood on all sides, but not a sign of a beast anywhere. In the afternoon we returned to camp rather disgusted, especially after the previous day's success, and Littledale soon came in with a similar report. He had found several herds of ewes and Ibex, and had seen a couple of Maral hinds, but of the stronger sex there was no trace. This was indeed an ewe day! Our minds were now turned towards the Mongolian side, which we thought the old rams might have chosen for their summer resort, though we decided to have a more careful survey of the surrounding country before shifting camp into the unknown.

We were up at 3 a.m., as usual, on the following morning, but found heavy clouds rolling in the sky, and a strong south-west wind blowing. The barometer was low, so we thought it was no use going out. At 6 a.m. all the ground round our tents was under snow, several inches thick, and the wind turned into a gale, raging furiously the whole day. This was

a most disappointing waste of time, and we felt highly disheartened as we sat under our canvas, which was, at every moment, on the verge of being torn to pieces, or carried off by the sweeping gusts of the hurricane. It was bitterly cold too, and all our warmer outfit was badly wanted.



OUR CAMP UNDER SNOW.

By evening the snow round the camp had melted, but the storm still raged, lasting all night, and as we got up at 3 a.m. the wind was still blowing steadily from the west. The cold was intense and the ground frozen hard. In hopes of finding sheep at a lower altitude we decided to have a try, and

started accordingly. My lot fell upon the country eastwards, up the Bain-Tchagan stream, where I had secured my first two trophies. Taba came with me this time, and kept assuring me that such weather was far more favourable for approaching sheep, the latter being less on their guard, and altogether less suspicious. We rode a couple of hours without seeing anything, till we reached the small buttresses at the entrance of the Happy Valley; here I spied a herd of ewes feeding quite low down on the slopes opposite. The wind seemed very shifty, and I felt rather glad they were not rams, for it would have been quite impossible to approach them. Here we dismounted, leaving the ponies hobbled on the river-bed.

Taba seemed confident we should find more sheep up the valley, and soon pointed out something moving about 400 yards in front of us. As I put up my glasses the beasts moved into a dip. "Kotchkor ba, arkhar ba?" I asked him. "Belbess" was his answer, ("I do not know"). So we advanced cautiously, crawling at times, and chancing the wind. On reaching a small saddle, there stood two old ewes amongst some rocks at a few yards from where we lay. By extraordinary luck they had not winded us. Back we went on all-fours in

order not to disturb them, and, making a long *détour*, continued up the main valley, where we soon caught sight of another lot of ewes, who this time had evidently got our wind, for they suddenly all lifted up their heads and galloped away, disappearing over a boulder. As I watched them make off my Zeiss distinctly spotted a fair ram among them. I thought they might not go far, as they could not have actually seen us, and decided to wait till they settled down again. Taba seemed to share my opinion, and after a short halt off we started in their direction, following up the narrow ravines between the low rolling hillocks, and carefully choosing the best hiding-places. The wind here blew in our faces, and the rocky pinnacles with small ridges joining them afforded capital stalking, if only the sheep had not shifted to higher slopes. We were cautiously advancing in this manner, like Red-Indians on the war-trail, inspecting every corner of ground below us from every crag we came across on our way, when finally Taba, who had gone on to my right in order to look over an intervening ridge, suddenly took off his cap and beckoned to me to come. So I crept up to where he lay motionless, and peeping over a ledge of rock caught sight of a fine old ram, quietly enjoying his morning siesta



"ENJOYING HIS MORNING SIESTA."

and chewing his cud, about eighty yards below us. Others were probably indulging in a similar process further down, but I could only see the one animal, and was unable to resist temptation. Moreover, as I was at comparatively close quarters and the wind being strong, he might suspect something at every moment, and dash off without giving me a chance. Feeling sufficient excuse, I took a steady aim and fired. The beast rolled over dead, and, as I expected, other rams jumped up from under the rocks and were out of sight in a second, the

ground presenting a sheer dip at that place. They all appeared again several hundred yards beneath us and crossed the stream, making for the opposite side. I counted eighteen altogether, as I watched them climbing up the left slopes of the nullah. They presently joined with a herd of ewes, and continued in one lot up the hill. Some of the rams carried beautiful heads, though the one I had bagged seemed as good as any of them. Unluckily, owing to the conformation of the ground, I had failed to get a second shot. I found my animal had rolled down some way, and had been stopped by his horns catching on a ledge of rock. I taped them on the spot; they measured 55 inches along the curve by $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches girth, $39\frac{1}{2}$ inches from tip to tip. As my hunters grallocked him, I sat down to watch the herd that had now halted half-way up the slopes and were examining our proceedings with the utmost curiosity, but, scared as they were, they soon trotted away and disappeared over the main ridge. As for us, we continued up the valley with the intention of finding a favourable pass into Mongolia, none of our Kalmuks having ever passed the frontier.

As we advanced, the valley became narrower and rocks more frequent; as for the dividing saddle, it

seemed to me impossible to attempt crossing it with pack-ponies, though I could only judge from a distance of some miles, there being no time to inspect the place thoroughly that day. On our way we came across numerous horns of Maral (*Cervus canadensis asiaticus* or *Cervus eustephanus*) that had been evidently shed many years before, white and weather-worn as they appeared. My hunters told me that the country abounded in Maral ten or twelve years ago, but that they had nearly all been shot for the sake of their precious antlers, and that the few that remained had taken refuge in the wooded districts on the Siberian side. We also saw a great number of sheep horns in the bed of the stream, whose owners had probably been killed by wolves, or had been starved to death by severe winters and heavy snowfalls. The country bore altogether a touch of wildness and desolation. Towards noon we were caught in a dreadful hail-storm, and returned to camp at 3 p.m. with my well-deserved trophy. I found Littledale in low spirits; his hunters had taken him by mistake to my ground, and he had convinced himself of the error by discovering our party as we were entering the Happy Valley.

That evening Vassili, the cook, produced for dinner roast fillet of *kotchkor*, which we found

excellent. As for the broth, it was quite good, and henceforward replaced Maggi's *consommé*, which we had been constantly using. Later on in the season, when the animals became fatter, we had to abandon their meat, owing to their strong sheepy flavour, for



RETURNING TO CAMP.

that of their domestic kinsmen, where stray Kirghiz procured us the latter. On the following morning, June 21st, the wind had not abated, and it was not till 7 a.m. that we left camp. This time Littledale went towards my old nullah where I had twice been successful. As for myself, I started with Taba in the direction of the valley westwards. It was

certainly not a promising day, and we rode a long way without even expecting to see anything. The valley was a wider one than that of Bain-Tchagan, with more overhanging crags on either side and no nice boulders with fresh grass between. At the bottom flowed a small, nameless stream, forming here and there small lakes and swamps. We spied an immense side-corry to our left, but saw nothing but rocks and snow. A little further I discovered a herd of female Ibex on the opposite side, probably the same which Littledale had seen two days previously, but no signs of males; in fact, the place did not in the least appeal to my imagination as being likely ground for sheep. There were no rolling hills with suitable pastures, and, should we have found game, it would have been a difficult job to approach it. At a spot where a long gully came down to the main valley I spied a large herd of sheep, apparently all ewes, far above us. Further on we crossed a low divide, and followed down another stream for two or three miles till another herd came in sight some 800 yards in front of us, feeding down at the foot of the right slopes. My telescope soon told me that they too were ewes, together with what seemed to me to be fair rams, though I was unable to distinguish them well owing to the bad light.



"A LARGE HERD OF SHEEP, APPARENTLY ALL EWES."

Taba thought they were worth approaching, so we dismounted, and began making our plans for the stalk. There was no question of continuing down the valley towards them, there being no possible hiding. The only way was to ascend a steep hill to our right, follow the ridge, and come down the



THE HAPPY VALLEY.

nearest lateral ravine to a place which I considered was about 200 yards from where they fed. The wind, I thought, blew uphill, so off we started, with Taba's approval. We left the ponies with my other hunter, who was to keep a sharp look-out over the movements of the animals, and signal to us in case they shifted to other ground. It was fated, how-

ever, that the day was not to prove a success. The ascent was dreadfully steep, and it took us a good hour and a half to get near the summit. In the meantime heavy clouds had been gathering, and the wind blew stronger every moment as we struggled up the precipitous cliffs. Presently light became more and more dim and a regular blizzard came on, covering us up with snow. In less than five minutes everything was white around us, and the cold so intense that we were nearly frozen as we lay amongst the rocks waiting for the storm to pass. In this dilemma Taba suggested that we had better go back to lower ground, there seeming to be no chance of the weather clearing up that day. Go back! This was easier said than done. The descent at places had to be worked backwards on all-fours. Moreover, such was the force of the gale that we had to cling hard to the rocks in order not to be blown off our feet; snow and hail simply blinded us, preventing us from securing a firm foothold on the few protruding ledges. We took a couple of hours to reach the horses, and that only thanks to Taba's skill, who somehow succeeded in groping his way down in absolute darkness. We returned to camp half frozen and thoroughly drenched. As for Littledale, he had failed in his stalk owing to uncertain wind, but had

managed to kill a young sheep, whose meat he had brought back for the pot. These constant gales from the west lasted during almost the whole week we spent at this camp. I must own that we were pitched most unfavourably with regard to this ;



WAITING FOR THE STORM TO PASS.

sweeping gusts would come down the narrow gully westwards and meet those from the main valley just at the place where we had camped, thus joining on our housetops from two different directions. This and other considerations prompted us strongly to shift camp into Mongolia, where, moreover, we

hoped to come across unmolested herds of old rams on higher ground. But a pass had to be found for the pack-horses, and our Kalmuks either knew nothing about the country over the frontier, or, if they had been in Chinese territory, which was doubtful, would in no way help us in the matter, fearing that their horses would be stolen by stray Kirghiz or Mongol nomadic tribes.

In this uncertainty we decided, Littledale and I, to start together on the following morning, June 22nd, towards the head of the Happy Valley, with the intention of seeing for ourselves if an easy pass could be discovered. Before entering the nullah, Littledale branched off to the left, where hills seemed lower and the ground more suitable for our purpose, whilst I was to reconnoitre the head of the Bain-Tchagan valley and see if the pass was as inhospitable for unshod hoofs as it appeared to be from a distance. But my exploring designs were soon to be checked by sight of game, for as we approached the well-known buttresses I spied a ram feeding a few hundred yards to our left. We quickly dismounted, and leaving the horses in a small hollow, made a long *détour* to get above the animal; but the wind, as usual, was shifty, and when I found myself within what I thought was 150 yards of my prey,

the beast had already become slightly suspicious and was moving slowly away. I had to take a hurried shot, resulting in a clean miss. "Never mind," said confident little Taba, "we will find others further up." In fact, I had hardly reloaded my rifle when more sheep walked into view by the bed of the stream. To my amazement, they had not been frightened by the report of my shot, and were busily engaged in their early breakfast. Unfortunately they proved to be ewes and young ones. They were feeding towards us, on our very way to the happy hunting grounds, and cutting us off from the coveted direction. We had no end of trouble in avoiding discovery, and had to go round a couple of miles, crawling now and then in full sight of them. We managed, however, to get round without disturbing them, and resumed our journey up the valley under cover of my favourite boulders. We had not gone far when Taba suddenly stopped me, pointing towards the river-bed below us. There lay a fine herd of fifteen sheep, all rams this time. There was no possible approach to within less than 500 yards from the spot they had chosen for their siesta, so we crouched down and waited. I had now entirely abandoned my good intentions of making myself useful by finding a favourable pass over the

frontier, and devoted all my attention to the mighty old sheep beneath us. I must acknowledge this weakness, but the sight of the quarry was too



"WATCHING."

tempting. Should the animals shift a couple of hundred yards towards us I felt sure of success, and the heads some of them carried were well worth trying for. We had not been an hour watching them when, to my joy, they all got up one after



"THEY CROSSED THE STREAM AT FULL GALLOP."

the other, and crossed the stream in our direction. Taba had foretold this, saying that the grazing was better on our side. For some time we lay low, till the whole herd disappeared below us; then we rushed down, hiding behind every rock, and presently found ourselves within 250 yards of the animals, whom we now saw feeding on the slopes under us. I was just on the point of starting towards a small pinnacle, within easy rifle range of the herd, when I noticed that they all of a sudden had become suspicious. A whiff of wind had probably reached them, and in an instant they were off, making back to the opposite side. Cruel luck, thought I, as I lowered my '303 and fired at the nearest one. It was a long shot, but the chance had to be taken. He staggered for a moment, then continued with the others. As they crossed the stream at full gallop I fired several more shots into the midst of the herd—there being no question of picking out the largest—and saw one of them fall, whilst two others remained behind the main bulk, struggling up the steep slopes and looking very sick. We waited a little, marking the direction taken by the two wounded ones, and started as soon as they had gone over a ridge. I was greatly disappointed when I came up to the dead beast, though I felt I had only

got what I deserved by "pumping the lead in" in such a reckless manner. His measurements were 35 inches along the curve by 17 girth. Taba gallocked him on the spot, whilst I followed the other two with hopes of a better result. On reaching the ridge where we had seen them last, after a steep scramble, I found one of the beasts lying dead on the opposite bank of a deep ravine; the third was nowhere to be seen. So I continued along a precipitous slope, covered with rolling stones. I could see the blood-tracks here and there, but was unable to judge whether they belonged to the dead one, or to the animal I was still following. To my disgust, a hail-storm came on at that exciting moment of the chase, but I was not going to be beaten. Taba now came up, and soon spotted my beast lying on the stones about 200 yards off, with his head towards us. We crouched down and lay motionless for about twenty minutes, which seemed two long hours to me. There was no hiding-place round us, and as I was trying to creep up nearer to finish him, the brute saw me and started off. By this time I was fairly soaked by the snow, which had by now turned into sleet, and thought of abandoning further pursuit; but Taba was as keen as ever, and we continued on the slippery rocks for some time straight

uphill. A good hour brought us to the head of the side-valley. Here we found our wounded fellow again lying half-way up the slope. I made a desperate scramble to get above him, and shot him through the heart just as he was preparing to make off. The two carried average heads: $48\frac{1}{2}$ by $17\frac{1}{2}$ and 39 by 17 inches. I returned to camp with my light trophies, exhausted, in a regular blizzard. Littledale had come back, saying he had seen no sheep, but had come across easy ground for the ponies to cross into Mongolia. He had gone out again up the main valley, and presently returned with the report that he had wounded the finest ram he had as yet seen, but that he had been unable to follow the blood-tracks owing to their having been covered up with snow, which now lay thick round our tents. As for the wind, it still blew as strong as ever.

CHAPTER IV.

Last days on the Tchagan-Burgaza—Pass over the Frontier—Shift Camp into Mongolia—A Blizzard—Major Cumberland's Camp—The Start—Map unreliable—Meet Chinese—Great numbers of Sheep Heads—Karaoul Suok—Chinese Governor—Passports—Chinese Officials—Interpreters—Joseph returns with fresh Stores—Start for Bain-Khairkhan Hills.

ON the morning of June 23rd the weather had not changed in our favour. We had decided to shift camp over the low pass north of the Happy Valley, and everything had been prepared for the start. Unfortunately no long march could be undertaken that day, and it was agreed that we should wait for a better chance. Though dark clouds covered the sky and the wind blew persistently, Littledale went out at 4 a.m. with hopes of coming across his wounded ram, whose pursuit he had had to abandon on the previous day, and whose tracks he had lost owing to the heavy snowfall. As for myself, I thought it hardly worth while to attempt a stalk, and remained in bed. Towards noon, the weather clearing up, we went out, my wife and I, with our smooth-bores after Willow

Grouse around the camp. We found some in the neighbourhood, and brought back a brace. These grouse were not shy, and kept running before us even after the shot. Littledale returned at 6 p.m. with the head of a fair ram, which he had secured out of a herd of ten, probably the same herd he had spied before on the slopes of the main valley. He had failed to find any sign of the wounded one, and I was astonished that he got anything at all, considering the gale that never ceased blowing all day.

On the following day, the weather not being settled enough for shifting camp, and my wife being very keen to see the wild sheep in their haunts, we started together as early as possible in the direction of the Happy Valley, taking with us Taba and another hunter. Littledale had kindly conceded to me the monopoly of Taba, who was undoubtedly the best man we had, contenting himself with Lepet, whom he considered next best. We crossed the same ground well known to me, and as we were following up the bed of the stream a herd of rams, about sixteen in number, came into view. They had lain down a mile ahead of us in a place which we could not possibly approach. The buttresses at the entrance of the nullah were too distant, and further advance was impracticable, for the animals had full command of the

lower ground. We therefore turned back in order to make a *détour* round a boulder to our left, and, keeping under cover, followed up a ridge, which joined eventually with the right slopes of the valley. This strategical operation took about an hour and a half to perform, there being deep stony gullies on the way, which presented a series of obstacles to our wretched horses. Finally we got on grass again, and having dismounted, managed to reach some rocks, from which we could plainly see the herd, about 500 yards off, lying on the river-bed. I never imagined that the spot where we now found ourselves was to be our observatory for the next eight hours. Taba as usual kept repeating that the sheep were sure to move in our direction as soon as they commenced feeding, the grazing on our side being better. No further advance was possible, so we settled down at 8 a.m., watching our quarry with the telescope, which I had firmly fixed between two ledges of rock for my wife to have a good view of the sheep. She was highly interested in their proceedings, and said that there were three first-class old rams amongst them, ten average-sized heads and three young ones, which statement I readily confirmed. It was quite probable that this was the herd out of which I had secured three on the 22nd, and which we now found almost



"THERE WERE THREE FIRST-CLASS OLD RAMS AMONGST THEM."

exactly in the same place ; moreover, it was as likely that they would choose, according to previous experience, the slopes beneath us for their evening meal, which fact would greatly facilitate our work. We therefore eagerly waited for the animals to get



TABA.

up and afford us amusement. But fate had decided otherwise. At 10 a.m., just as we were picking out the one which we thought would constitute a worthy trophy, up they all jumped, scared without any apparent cause, and galloped off towards the opposite slopes. For some time we could not make out what

had frightened them in this manner, when, on looking down the valley, there was one of our Kalmuks with two ponies ascending the hill in full view! If he had been nearer at that moment I really think I should have wilfully mistaken him for a *kotchkor*! Taba also showed signs of fury in his peculiar way. He explained to us that this was the hunter who had been sent from camp to bring the meat of the sheep killed by Littledale on the previous day. Notwithstanding all the exhortations given him to take the greatest precautions, and by no means to start before evening, he had been tired of waiting, and in this reckless way had spoilt our chance. And this was one of our hunters! Great was our consternation and disappointment. Nothing, however, could be done; so we kept watching the herd, and decided to wait in hope of seeing the animals come down again in the afternoon. We saw them stop half-way up the hill and settle down on the slopes. To stalk them where they now lay meant certain failure, to say nothing of three or four hours' hard climbing. Unfortunately our expectations were all to be baffled that day. Nothing would induce the sheep to shift their quarters again in our direction, though we persevered in our crouching position till 4 p.m., suffering acutely from "pins and needles." Finally

we gave it up, thoroughly disgusted, and returned to camp under the scornful looks of the rams, which did not even honour us by getting up as we departed.

At 6 p.m. we were under canvas again, indulging in a roast fillet of sheep which had caused us many a bitter hour. Littledale had also been unsuccessful, and it was decided that we should under no pretext whatever "linger any longer," but shift camp on the following day across the frontier. On June 25th, after a stay of eight days, we finally quitted our first hunting grounds for the unknown Mongolian *plateaux* in search of fortune. The start was to take place as early as possible, but it was not till 9 a.m. that the ponies were loaded, a desperate chase after several stray ones having lasted not less than three hours. Our Kalmuks being extremely unwilling to visit foreign countries, lazy in ordinary times, accentuated as much as they could this defect of theirs. Poor Yakoub, the *demitcha*, was at a loss to enforce his orders, and, though several incidents occurred in which the whip played a great part, it was principally owing to the energetic demonstrations of Nicholas, Cristo, and Gabriel that we eventually formed anything like a caravan. We started down the main river, and, crossing it, began following up one of the small tributaries of the Bain-Tchagan

stream in a south-easterly direction. I rode in front with the ladies, whilst Littledale stayed behind in order to see that the pack-ponies were not led back to Kosh-Agatch and home, as our Kalmuks so eagerly desired. As we advanced in slow procession, the hills seemed to become lower, excepting due south of us, where the Happy Valley, parallel to which we were now going, was concealed from view by the towering ridges and peaks on either side of it. Around us were low, grassy, rolling boulders, with small ordinary ravines, probably the winter resorts of sheep; for, though we saw none, many skulls and horns strewed the ground on our way. The slopes were covered with lovely spring flowers, such as crocuses, buttercups, and Edelweiss. Towards 11 a.m. we were caught in a hailstorm which lasted an hour, and eventually turned into rain. As we were entirely ignorant of our way, I halted with the ladies at a place where someone had evidently camped, in order to wait for Littledale and the rest of our caravan. Taba presently galloped up, and explained to us that he had spent a fortnight the year before on this very spot with Major Cumberland; he also gave us the good news that the pack-ponies were following up at a short distance. Towards noon we were in sight of the dividing pass at the

head of the small valley along which we were marching. A long slanting slope still separated us from Chinese territory, and the pass appeared to be easily negotiable for the horses. Another hour brought us to the top. Here we were met by a strong gale blowing in our faces and sweeping furiously along the dreary *plateau* before us. The hills in the foreground were of no great height, but we could distinguish in the dim background the snow-clad mountain peaks of the Mongolian Altai. We now stood at an altitude of about 9,000 feet; in front of us lay a marshy tableland, which we had to cross in order to reach a valley running eastward, under whose slopes we hoped to find shelter from the tiresome cold wind, as well as a suitable place for pitching camp. Unfortunately this *plateau* proved by no means light work for the horses, for it consisted of patches of grass intermingled with shingle, soaked through either by freshly melted snow or by springs, thus affording no resistance to our horses' feet, who sank knee-deep at every moment into the treacherous soil. I say treacherous because to all appearance it was perfectly firm and safe. There was no avoiding it, however, and it took us a long time to get over the swamps. As for the pack-ponies behind, I

cannot conceive how they managed with their heavy loads to overcome the difficulty. This first acquaintance with China was hardly a satisfactory one, and we felt entitled to hope that the discovery of undisturbed herds of sheep would amply make up for it. The ladies, who had been placed under my care, were persistently confident of success, and greatly contributed to uphold the level of cheerfulness through the hardships of this first march into unknown country. They proved most useful moreover in finding a favourable spot for camp as we reached the valley, through which flowed a small stream known on my forty-verst Russian map as the Boro - Burgassy, whilst I stood on a ridge watching our caravan struggling through the marsh, and signalling to Littledale in order to let him know the direction which was to be taken. I must own that the map, which had hitherto been our principal guide, now seemed hardly reliable, and this became more and more evident as we advanced into Mongolia. The stream on the banks of which we camped was known to the natives under an entirely different name. It flowed into the Suok River, one of the tributaries of the Kobdo, in whose watershed we now found ourselves. I cannot pass unnoticed the way in which Mongols christen

their rivers. These are divided into two classes according to the colour of their water. If it is clear, the stream is called *Kara-sou* (black water); if dirty or milky, *Ak-sou* or *Tchagan-sou* (white water). These two rubrics include nearly every river. The spot chosen for our camp was quite a comfortable one, close to the stream, and sheltered by the left bank from the bitterly cold wind. Patches of snow here and there reminded us of the fairly high altitude (about 8,800 feet). East and north of us were low rolling boulders, whilst towering snowy summits glistened in the distance. We could locate the Happy Valley by a long ridge of crags a few miles off, now due westwards. This rocky spine extended eastwards for several miles, sinking gradually lower into grassy hillocks down to the Suok River, into which flowed the stream on whose banks we were now camped.

The night was a very frosty one, and when Cristo came in to wake me up on the following morning (June 26th) at 3 a.m. I found it very trying to get out of my blankets. During the night a pack of wolves had attacked some of our ponies and scared them to such an extent that our Kalmuks found it a difficult job to secure them. Some of the horses had unhobbled themselves, and travelled great dis-

tances towards our last camp. This delayed our start until about 5 a.m., when we finally managed to muster the steeds we required. The ground allotted to me lay due south, whilst Littledale got the Happy Valley, which he would now have to enter from the Chinese side, over the pass we had failed to reconnoitre previously. The weather seemed to have cleared up again, and it was in the best of spirits that I left camp with Taba in order to visit "fresh fields and pastures new." We rode some time before reaching likely sheep ground. About an hour brought us to a small lake surrounded by higher crests of hills; on its shores lay quantities of sheep horns, though none of them were of great size. On the slopes of loose red shingle round it we found transverse paths and numerous tracks of game. We were now exploring entirely new ground, where my guide Taba had never been, but it struck me that this was, according to all probabilities, a winter resort of sheep, for it was low and sheltered from the bitter north wind. A stiff climb over rolling stones now awaited the ponies, and we finally attained a ridge from which we were able to spy the opposite slopes of a long deep nullah running eastwards, and affording splendid grazing, consequently a most likely spot for the sheep's morning



"A PACK OF WOLVES ATTACKED OUR PONIES."

meal. My glass soon confirmed our suppositions. Seven sheep were feeding quietly on the other side of the valley ; Taba, who was using my telescope, said, "*Kitchinek kotchkor*," which meant "Young rams," a highly disappointing statement, which was nevertheless correct. It was a herd of two and three year old animals, together with some ewes, at first unnoticed. We immediately left the ponies in charge of "the understudy" and started off as cautiously as possible, Taba and myself, towards the next ridge in order to get a good view of the far side of the valley. Unfortunately there was no hiding, and the rams presently caught sight of us, and darted off, followed by a troop of ewes, which jumped up from some lateral ravine. When we found ourselves on the opposite crest an hour later we of course did not expect to see anything in the valley we had just crossed, but began spying the grounds beyond. The sun was now high and exceedingly hot. The country before us presented a curious aspect of low volcanic-shaped hillocks ; the soil was arid and red. I could distinguish Suok River in the distance, flowing through a wide steppe, and on the other side, due south of us, stood a higher range, which my map showed me to be the "Bain-Khairkhan" hills. Several fine-looking corries in that direction

seemed to promise happy hunting grounds, and patches of snow here and there gave me the impression of the right altitude for sheep at that time of year. Eastwards ran the main ridge of the Mongolian Altai with its lofty peaks of everlasting snow. I thought it was hardly worth while to visit the lower boulders beneath us, when Taba suddenly squatted down and pointed out a couple of rams some 800 yards below. They were making their way up from the dry rocky ground towards the pastures above. As they were advancing slowly, and seemed to carry very fair horns, we decided to try and cut them off from the higher ground. A steep ridge ran down from where we lay, both sides of which were covered with loose shingle; so we ran down the slope, under cover of this ridge, as fast as we could lay our feet to the ground, till we reached a saddle, which we expected the animals would cross. Had they done so at that moment I certainly should have been unable to shoot, for the pace at which we had gone rendered me breathless for the next five minutes. We waited some time, and, seeing no sign of the sheep, moved cautiously over the ridge commanding a view of the whole corrie. Though we spied every ledge of rock as carefully as we could there was not a beast in sight.

The wind had been favourable during our manœuvres, and Taba was at a loss to find a clue to the mystery. Many tracks and droppings showed us that the place was by no means uninhabited by sheep, though the dryness of the soil seemed to render it unattractive



"WE RAN
DOWN THE SLOPE."

to them. A long climb back now awaited us. It took us about an hour under a tropical sun to cover the distance which had taken us ten minutes downhill. I know nothing more disappointing than a climb back after an unsuccessful stalk, and I daresay that every sportsman will share the feelings I experienced. Taba gave me, as usual, a bit of his mind in English; poor little fellow, he was the keenest hunter I ever came across.

We reached the spot from which we had sighted the two vanished rams, and on halting in order to inspect the other corries I spied a herd of six sheep in the distance, about a mile lower down. "Taba, *Kotchkor*," said I. "*Iok*," that is, "No," was the answer; "*djeran*," as he carefully replaced the telescope on the grass. Now *djeran* is a term I have often heard in the Caucasus and in Asia. In the former the natives use it to express either Chamois or Antelope; in the eastern Russian steppes Kalmuks and Kirghiz apply it to the Saiga antelope, the same for Russian Turkestan, where both the Saiga and the *Antilope gutturosa* are to be found. I therefore concluded that we were in the presence of antelope, but being too far off was unable to identify the animals. Later on, during our return journey, we came across large herds of *Antilope gutturosa* on the Kosh-Agatch plain,

and secured several. Littledale was very anxious to know if the habitat of the Saiga extended as far east as Mongolia, and being keen to shoot one, made it a point to cross-examine our Kalmuks on the subject on our return to camp; but no useful information was to be got from them, although we did our best to describe the Saiga, drawing their attention to the swelling on the beast's nose. I hardly think that the Saiga exists in Mongolia, and suppose that the animals we saw must have been *Antilope gutturosa*.

Seeing that there was no sport to be obtained on the low ground, I suggested to Taba that we might try the hills to the westward, and spend the remainder of the day in inspecting the numerous corries outside the Happy Valley, where Littledale was at work. So we struck a ridge, and in a couple of hours found ourselves at an elevation of about 11,000 feet on a stony *plateau* commanding a view over a large stretch of rocky country, with stiff walls of grim-looking crags on every side, and broad slides of snow running down the steep ravines. A basin of hills, two or three miles in diameter, especially attracted my attention owing to the occasional patches of bright green fresh grass scattered over it—a likely place for sheep. I accordingly sat down to spy, and soon discovered a herd of rams feeding

slowly up the opposite slopes. Neither Taba nor I could distinguish the size of their horns, nor estimate at that distance the feasibility of a stalk. We decided, however, unanimously to try our fortune, and started downhill without delay, neither of us knowing anything about the ground, and trusting in Providence to get safely back to camp. Taba led the way over the rocks and loose shingle, and though we went at a good pace we took over an hour to reach the bottom of the valley.

My companion's primitive leather mocassins scored off my best nailed shooting boots on these stones, and after many a fall I finally found myself in the bed of a dried-up stream. Taba's movements and wonderful agility struck me here for the first time ; he would jump from one rock to another, alight on a sharp edge, stand motionless for some time where a Chamois would hesitate, performing marvellous feats of equilibrium. The force of gravitation seemed to have no effect on him, and I found it a difficult job to follow him over the steep, broken ground.

Another half-hour brought us to a ridge within 400 yards of the sheep, and my disappointment was great when I saw before me eight rams, all four or five years old, but not one of them worth a shot.

"*Kitchinek*" ("small"), whispered Taba. "Yes,"

thought I, "and we are a long way from our dinner." We watched the animals feed over a boulder, and started in the direction of camp. Here again Taba showed himself equal to his task, and we were within sight of the tents just as it was getting dark, after a hard three hours' pull. Littledale was back. He had failed to approach two fine old rams owing to shifty wind, so that we had neither of us taken our rifles out of their covers. At dinner we held council with the ladies, and decided to send one of our men to the nearest Chinese post, or "*karaoul*," in order to secure, if possible, a guide acquainted with the country beyond, none of our Kalmuks having ever crossed the Siberian frontier. Moreover, the day's result having shown that our grounds were not promising for sport, and as we had both sighted a fine-looking range of hills to the south, which seemed to correspond on our map with the Bain-Khairkhan range, we thought it advisable to shift camp as soon as possible, or rather as soon as the Chinese officials would condescend to supply us with the guide we had sent for. But we could not expect him within two or three days, a delay which had to be endured, and which we spent in revisiting our old grounds.

On the following morning, June 27th, I started early, at 3.30 a.m., towards the Happy Valley,

Littledale taking the country I had tried the previous day. It was a lovely morning. During the night there had been a hard frost, and when I woke up I found the water frozen in our tent. Unfortunately the stove was of no avail, owing to the scarcity, or rather to the quality, of the fuel, which consisted of dried horse or camel-dung, native *tezek*, the smoke of which would have rendered our home entirely uninhabitable. I may mention that the poor cook, Vassili, was in despair for the same reason, our roast *kotchkor* usually bearing a strong smell of *tezek* smoke. It took us a long time to reach the entrance to the valley, our ponies stumbling over the marshy tableland we had to cross, and only found ourselves among the well-known buttresses at 6.30. Taba had been conceded to me for the day, Littledale having taken out with him a hunter named Lepet, who, though he was subject to eye-soreness, yet could see as well as any man on our planet, and discover game where telescopes seemed useless. I left my "second-horse man" in charge of the ponies, and started up the nullah with Taba. We followed the bed of the stream for some time, examining carefully the slopes on either side, and stopping now and then to spy the lateral ravines, at the bottom of which the wily old rams enjoy their siesta, but there were no signs of

sheep till we had gone almost half-way up the valley. At this stage, just as we had passed a sharp turning, a lot of about fifteen rams came into sight some 500 yards ahead of us. Unfortunately the wind kept blowing steadily in our backs, and there was no means of making a *détour* without being discovered. So we both lay down, and waited in the hope that fate might alter the direction of the wind. Naturally it did nothing of the sort, and as we crawled along the stones we saw the whole herd get up, cross the stream, and trot up the opposite slope, till they all disappeared over the last ridge. I watched them the whole way with my glass, and found that two or three of them would have been most satisfactory trophies. We were now at a loss how to proceed, for the wind kept blowing up the valley, and there was no time that day for a circuit, which would have taken us five or six hours to make. So we continued on our hopeless errand, quite prepared to see any sheep that might still be in front of us speed mercilessly away, when Taba suddenly stopped me, pointing towards a small grassy boulder, some 800 yards ahead of us. It stood at the very junction of the two streams forming the main river, which divided up two narrow rocky gullies. I crouched down, and soon found that we were in the

presence of another lot of fifteen rams, but could not tell whether they carried good heads or not. In any case it was probably my last chance for the day ; so I beckoned to Taba to follow me down to the bed of the river, whose banks at this place were fairly steep, and, as I thought, might afford hiding for another few hundred yards. In five minutes we were out of sight of the herd, and found as I had expected that we might advance in this manner by keeping as close as possible to the right bank of the stream. In places we were obliged, in order to keep under cover, to wade knee-deep in icy-cold water ; in others we had to crawl over the stones in full sight of the sheep, but happily only for a few seconds, till another slope hid us from view. The wind was still wrong, nevertheless I hoped that we might get within shot before the rams suspected anything, as they were some way above us. We soon found ourselves within 400 yards of them, but here ended the protective slopes, and we could advance no further without being discovered. I took out my "Zeiss" to examine the herd from behind the last corner, and found that several of the beasts were quite shootable, though none of them carried first-class heads. They were quietly grazing towards us, and I could see no other solution of the dilemma than to wait on the chance

of their coming within shot. I explained my design to Taba as best I could, but was met with a sceptical look from my companion, and the laconic answer, "*Salkhyn yaman*," which meant "Wind bad." I was just thinking that the little man was perhaps right, and that we might be scented at any moment, when I saw him make up his mind and creep on in full view, carrying off my precious rifle. I could but follow him.

All went right for a hundred yards or so. We crouched motionless every two or three steps, watching the sheep with one eye, and with the other picking out the next large stone for a halting-place. At last a treacherous whiff brought them the forebodings of danger, and suddenly lifting their heads they all began gazing intently in our direction. No time was to be lost. Putting up the 200-yards sight, and taking a hurried aim at the one which I took to be the oldest ram, I fired, and to my greatest surprise saw him stagger for a second. A moment after he had disappeared with the others over the nearest ridge. They gave me, however, a second chance—though a poor one, I must own—and the result was a broken hind leg for one of the smaller rams.

Taba now wanted to follow them up immediately, but I thought it wiser to wait, and not frighten the

one I considered I had wounded, in which case he would separate from his companions, and probably lay down in some neighbouring ravine, where we might stalk him again. So I caught my hunter by his coat, and forcing him to sit down by my side, tried to explain my intentions to the little man, who kept repeating "*Baalou iok*"—which meant "Not wounded." Evidently his idea was to get another shot at the animals by making a dash to the ridge over which they had gone; this would have brought me to the place breathless and panting, entirely unfit to take aim. Moreover, he had not noticed the result of my first shot. In the meanwhile, as I sat low, the herd came in sight about a mile in front of us, making up a steep slope of shingle, and I found that its number had now increased to over thirty. Behind came my three-legged youngster, who was struggling hard to keep up with the others. My rifle had awakened the rumbling echoes of the valley, and several lots of ewes were galloping furiously up different slopes.

When they had all disappeared from view, and calm was re-established, we started slowly up the grassy bank towards the place where our sheep had been feeding, and to my dismay found no blood-tracks whatever. My companion's triumphant look seemed

to repeat "*Baalou iok*," though I must acknowledge that he did his best to prove he was wrong. I felt quite humbled at that moment, and was the first to give up the search for invisible blood-tracks.

Calling him away, we made for a small stream and sat down to lunch. Of course our thoughts turned upon the mess I had made of the whole business, and I believe we hardly uttered a word, when Taba, who was perpetually on the *qui vive* and constantly looking round about him, pointed up a narrow gully which led down to the place where we sat. I could only distinguish stones piled up one over the other, and presently spotted one which seemed more yellow than the others, about 300 yards off. Up went my "Zeiss," followed by an exclamation, "*Kotchkor!*" The tide had turned, and this time the triumphant looks were on my side. We had been quietly sitting for the last half-hour in full view of my wounded ram, nearly within shot of him! The brute was lying on the stones with his head towards us, evidently very sick. I loaded my rifle and was off in a second up the bed of the torrent, hiding where I could. But the animal was not dead yet, and as I was about to fire, got up slowly and started away. I ran on as fast as my legs could carry me, just in time to see him disappear round a boulder. Naturally my two shots were of no

avail in the heat of the chase and breathless as I was. Again I followed on over the rolling stones. Luckily the banks were steep on either side, and the beast could only go along the bed of the stream. This headlong pursuit lasted about an hour, and it was not till I reached the very top of the gully that I saw my ram slacken his pace and lie down. Heavy loss of blood had greatly weakened him, and I can hardly tell which of the two was the most exhausted when at last I finished him at close quarters. His horns taped fairly well, the following being the measurements : Length along curve, 46 in. ; girth at base, $18\frac{3}{4}$ in. ; spread, 25 in. My first shot had smashed his thigh and entered the stomach. Absence of blood from such wounds produced by small-bore bullets is a great disadvantage, and has caused me to lose many an animal before now. Taba proceeded to grallock him, whilst I went back to fetch the ponies, whom we had left a long way down the nullah.

I found my second hunter, who rejoiced in the pleasant-sounding name of Takhua, fast asleep and the horses gone. He brought them back, however, after an hour's search, and we started towards the dead sheep. Taba had already cut up the animal, so we loaded the ponies with the meat, which was badly wanted for the kitchen, sending Takhua

straight to camp with our well-earned quarry. As for ourselves, we started up a small river in the direction of home, and crossing a pass reached the tents at 6 p.m. without having seen any more game that day. Littledale, as I expected, had found nothing but young rams and *arkhar*, i.e. ewes.

Taking advantage of the weather, the ladies had been busy washing and drying linen the whole morning. In the afternoon they had gathered flowers round camp, pressing them in the numerous halfpenny novels we had brought out with us for the journey. June 28th was an off-day for me. There had been a hard frost during the night, and a bitterly cold north wind was blowing when Cristo came in to wake me up at 6 a.m. Feeling very tired from the previous day's exertions, I decided to remain in bed, especially as the new ground eastward did not promise to yield sport. Moreover, we intended to send Joseph to fetch more stores from Kosh-Agatch, and I thought I might usefully spend the afternoon in writing letters. Littledale had started off at an early hour. No news had come from the Chinese post, and we eagerly expected our messenger with the guide he was to bring back with him. All day the cold was intense. Our Kalmuks were constantly ordered

about by the *demitcha* to gather *tezek*, our only fuel, in the large leather bags that had been lent to us at Ongudai; unfortunately the precious stuff was damp, owing to a heavy snowstorm that came on, and there was more smoke than warmth to be obtained from it. Roast mutton was out of the question that day, and we had to content ourselves with tinned tongue and sardines. Towards evening Littledale came in with a fair head, saying he had wounded another and a much finer ram, but had been unable to follow up his tracks in the storm. The following day brought no change in the weather; my barometer kept low, and a regular gale blew from the west. Nevertheless I went out at 8 a.m., returning to camp drenched and half frozen late in the afternoon, having seen but three ewes and a couple of marmots. Joseph had started for Kosh-Agatch with four ponies, letters and instructions to catch us up either at the Karaoul Suok, or at the foot of the Bain-Khairkhan range, which we next intended to try for *Ovis Ammon*. The ladies, having lit their candles to warm themselves, never left their tents during the whole day. Littledale somehow managed to discover his wounded animal's trail, and brought in a most satisfactory head, measuring $18\frac{7}{8}$ inches in girth. There being still no news from the

karaoul, we all decided to have one more day's outing at that place, and, in the event of no one coming to our relief, to continue our march eastwards and interview the Chinese official ourselves, using my Russian survey map as our only guide.



A DAY'S REST.

I went out accordingly at daybreak next morning, taking with me Taba and one of the other hunters. The night had been very cold and the weather was quite settled again. I intended to give our old ground a last deciding chance, and to make my way as far as possible in a south-western direc-

tion, so as to get well behind the Happy Valley. There was a large tract of country which neither of us had yet explored, and it was quite probable that the sheep, frightened by our frequent visits to the main nullah, might have shifted their quarters over the ridge southwards, where a great number of ravines would afford the old rams the shelter they badly required. We therefore crossed without dismounting, or even spying the two broad valleys which I had visited on the 26th, and where I had only come across young rams and ewes (*arkhar*), and it was not before we had ridden for three good hours that I considered myself on the regular war-path, and began to advance cautiously. We now found ourselves on a small tableland, at an altitude of about 9,000 feet, under the southern ridge of the Happy Valley, and the long stretches of snow, melting fast under the sun's powerful rays, converted the gravelly soil into muddy swamps; our ponies, incapable of much exertion, soon refused to work. Leaving them to the care of my Kalmuk gillie, I went on with Taba, and presently sat down to spy. Numerous stony corries lay before us, with patches of fine grass below, and small streams trickling along the bottom into the Suok Valley. A herd of sheep soon came into sight; they were

mostly ewes, feeding on the slopes of a deep ravine some 800 yards below us. Two or three rams amongst them seemed to promise very fair trophies. These had evidently finished their meal, and were slumbering in the open whilst their spouses kept watch. At first I decided that they must be young rams, the larger ones generally keeping apart from *arkhar* at that time of year, and I was about abandoning them, when my shikari said they were *Yan kotchkor* (big rams), which statement my telescope soon confirmed. Little Taba was seldom mistaken in his judgment! Unhappily, the undulating slopes, over which we advanced on all-fours, soon broke into an abrupt descent, and prevented further concealment. We crawled back accordingly, and, making a long *détour*, tried to stalk them from another side; but here again we were stopped by the flat stretch of grass leading straight down to the herd. Some of the ewes had fed up towards us in the meantime, and considerably interfered with our approach. Moreover, the wind veered round in a most dangerous way. After several unsuccessful trials to get nearer from other directions, I finally convinced myself that the only way was to lay low and wait, in case they might come towards us later on in the day or feed

into easier ground. As I examined the rams more closely, they showed far better heads than I had thought at first, and I was busy taping them mentally, when towards 1.30 they lazily got up one after the other, slowly stretching themselves, and, shaking their bodies, started feeding uphill. This was a good omen. They kept advancing steadily, looking up now and again, ever on the alert. At this stage Taba suggested that we should shift our positions, as the sheep were heading to our left. So we crawled back silently out of view, and striking across a slope of loose shingle squatted down some two hundred yards lower, in a small depression, where a grassy plot in front of me presented a capital rest for my rifle. Here we both lay flat on our stomachs and waited. Presently the rams came up within range, and carefully drawing a bead on the largest I let go. The thud so well known to the sportsman's ear answered instantaneously; the animal staggered for a moment, but picking himself up trotted away. The other two rams, strange to say, abandoning the rest of the herd which pelted away downhill, ran straight up towards us—and here in my excitement I fired two shots at sixty yards, resulting in two clean misses. There was no time for reloading again, for they soon popped over a ridge and disappeared. I

was very sick at this performance, but as I felt sure of having hit the first ram, I rushed off, closely followed by Taba, in the direction he had taken. We soon found blood. The tracks led up for some time along the slope, but as we reached the foot of a small *col* dividing the two corries we could find no more red-stained blades of grass to direct us. Now was the dilemma; had he managed to scramble over the ridge, or, being unable to do so, gone down to the bottom of the valley? I consulted Taba, who was disposed to favour the latter alternative; but this meant at least four hours of considerable toiling with a doubtful issue, and our camp was now many miles off. I chose the ridge, and great was my delight when from the top of it I caught sight of my ram lying on the edge of a snow-drift, some 300 yards below me! But he was still alive. Creeping down stealthily in full sight of him I succeeded in going another hundred yards before he noticed my approach, and as I was about to fire, he got up slowly and gave me a broadside shot as he stood in the snow. Off went my Purdey, dropping him stone dead in his tracks. As I had expected, I found him to tape well, the horn measurements being 52 inches along the curve, 19 inches girth, and 38 inches spread. Taba pro-

ceeded to cut off his valuable head, which we now carried by turns up the precipitous slopes. The meat was left to the vultures, the place being entirely out of the reach of ponies. A couple of hours brought us to the high *plateau* where the horses awaited us. We now made for camp, as daylight was failing fast, and heartily greeted the sight of our tents at 7 p.m. On our way back Taba said that he had counted at least forty ewes (*arkhar*) and about twenty rams (*kotchkor*) in the herd we had come across. In the skirmish I had failed to count the deserters.

I found the ladies in high spirits. The evening was so warm that we all dined out of doors, discussing the day's events, and the important question of the morrow's start. Littledale had had bad luck, and brought in only a small head. On the following morning, July 1st, our camp presented a most lively aspect. Cristo, Gabriel, our Russian interpreter Nicholas, and all our Kalmuks were busy at work from 6 a.m. loading the ponies, pulling down the tents, and preparing everything for the start. Our *demitcha*, Yakoub, though a thorough gentleman of his kind, was not up to his mission. He kept ordering his men about, but these obeyed reluctantly, and we had to depend almost entirely on our servants and

Taba, who made himself useful all round. We were off at 9 a.m., but the packs did not start till 11.

According to the map the Chinese *karaoul* lay about ten miles due south, but we soon found that it was much further than we had expected, so did the horses, for it was not until 3 p.m. that we caught sight of the Kha's *yourts* (Kha is the title given to the Governor of a *karaoul*), after a march of about twenty-five versts (sixteen miles). Our route led down the Boro-Burgassy Valley almost the whole way. The country was rocky and barren. Precipitous cliffs with grassy tablelands above stood up on either side, growing gradually lower as we advanced, and turning eventually into an undulating steppe, through which, a few miles beyond the *karaoul*, flows the Suok River. That day we came across numerous skulls of sheep strewn the ground, and now and again piled up in heaps, for what purpose we could not imagine. Perhaps they were meant as an offering to the gods, corresponding to the coloured ribbons hanging on trees in the Kalmuk region. None of these heads were worth picking up. We spied several ewes on the surrounding slopes, but saw no rams. The weather was lovely, the sun scorching hot, and I believe this was the warmest march we had during the entire trip. A few miles

before reaching the *karaoul* we were met by half a dozen Chinamen on horseback, all in the most picturesque costumes. We understood that they had been sent by the head official, or Kha, to welcome us in Chinese territory. They wore sheepskin-lined coats of different colours, by no means tight-fitting



SKULLS OF SHEEP PILED UP IN HEAPS.

breeches entering into Russian leather embroidered top-boots with turned-up points at the toes, and various-shaped caps, over which coral beads denoted their respective ranks in Chinese heirarchy. One of these men, who appeared to be in command, wore a silver belt around his waist with numerous trinkets attached to it, such as a pipe-case, a small box, a

bit of flint, etc., all silver mounted. This belt was destined later on to form the subject of long and unsuccessful bargaining between the Littledales and its owner. The others also carried belts of lesser value. Their rifles, slung on their shoulders, were primitive flint-locks. The length of their pig-tails was also in proportion to their rank. Naturally our conversation was of the briefest description, though I several times put questions about *kotchkor*, of which they seemed to be entirely ignorant. We now soon reached the *karaoul*. It consisted of a few *yourts* scattered here and there along the banks of the stream. At the further end of the village stood a more respectable-looking *yourt*, surrounded by a wooden palisade, into which were stuck several red and yellow flags. This was the Kha's palace. We decided to pitch our camp some two hundred yards away from the *yourts*, so as to avoid the close neighbourhood of unwelcome insect pests that would be only too delighted to make acquaintance with European blood. Our pack-ponies not having yet arrived, I went with my wife to inspect the native dwellings, and found them even dirtier than we had anticipated. A few ragged Chinamen sat smoking their long pipes round the fireplace, and the combined smoke rendered the air stifling. They all seemed very astonished at the

sight of us, and made a circle round us, examining us closely, fingering our clothes, and paying special attention above all things to my wife's riding crop. We had to rely entirely on our pantomimic powers to explain the use of the different articles they were interested in. Needless to say that we shortened our visit, especially as we understood from their signs that the head official was about to come and greet the distinguished white foreigners. Our tents were hardly up, when we saw the procession approach. At the head of it walked the Kha in his Chinese uniform, with the traditional peacock feather in his cap as an emblem of his governorship. By his side came a small boy (who turned out to be his interpreter), carrying his pipe and tobacco; the followers, in whom we recognised our old friends who had been sent to meet us, marched behind. The sight promised quite an imposing interview. After the preliminary bows and tacit expressions of friendship we found that, with regard to conversation between his interpreter and ours, there was a missing link, viz. from Kalmuk to Chinese. Luckily this gap was soon filled by a Kalmuk who happened to be at the *karaoul* at the time, and who was acquainted with both languages, having had frequent dealings with the Kobdo merchants. His name

was Daniel, and we forthwith engaged his services for the Mongolian journey at the rate of twenty roubles per month. In this manner our exchange of civilities went through four stages before it was finally comprehended on both sides; thus Littledale



H. A. Hall 1920

“WE WERE MET BY HALF A DOZEN CHINAMEN.”

spoke to me in English, which I translated into Russian for Nicholas, who turned it into Kalmuk for Daniel, who next translated it into Mongolian Chinese for the boy, who eventually brought it to the comprehension of the Kha in pure Pekin idiom. Every sentence took about half an hour to go round, which considerably lengthened the interview. Our

main object was to obtain a reliable guide for the country we intended to explore, but the old man kept avoiding the question, and on being summoned to give a definite answer said he was unable to comply with our wishes without having previously received orders from the authorities of Kobdo. On the other hand he gave us a most lamentable description of his private misfortunes, saying that he had been sent to this distant post through the intrigues of jealous compatriots, and that he had had to leave his wife and children at Pekin. Finally he rose and departed, though not before having asked us to produce our passports.

Towards evening Littledale and I returned his visit. Bringing with us the precious passports, which had been duly *viséd* by the Chinese Legations in London and St. Petersburg, and followed by our interpreters, we solemnly entered the Governor's *yourt*. Our firm intention was to insist upon being supplied with a native guide; but here again we received evasive answers, and none of the suite knowing anything about the country or the game that was to be found, we had to rely on our personal inspiration. The Kha's *yourt* into which we were introduced was larger and more comfortable than the others. It was hermetically closed by felt, strewn

with carpets, and the furniture consisted of a small writing-desk, two or three low stools, and a common wooden cupboard carrying an ordinary guinea clock ; in the corner were piled up numerous brass implements of various sizes and shapes, which looked more like instruments of torture than basins and jugs. The gentleman with the peacock feather greeted us warmly, but the conversation under such conditions could hardly be lively, and ended in a complete *fiasco*. We used all our diplomatic resources to obtain someone acquainted with the region, saying that we were ourselves important people in our country, and that our sovereigns would be very much annoyed if they knew that we had not been treated according to our position, etc.—but all in vain. The constant reply was that he had received no orders from Kobdo. Moreover, after having perused our passports, he told us that he would have to send them to the authorities of that town to be carefully examined, and that we should be obliged to wait till they were returned, which implied three weeks' stay at the *karaoul*. Paying no attention to this ultimatum, we solemnly got up, thanked him for his courtesy, and retired with the firm intention of starting on the following day. In this dilemma our new Chinese interpreter Daniel came up to us

and proposed himself as a guide, saying he knew the country well enough, and asking us not to repeat this to any of the *karaoul* officials. We naturally accepted his services, thankful to have got out of the difficulty.



DANIEL.

The evening was quite warm, though we were still at an altitude of about 7,000 feet. Next morning we found that our ponies had been so exhausted by the previous day's long march that we had to give up all hopes of leaving the *karaoul* until another twenty-four hours' rest should render them fit for work. It was only one day lost after all, and we

expected Joseph every moment with a month's stores from Kosh-Agatch—reinforcements which we badly required. The weather continued beautiful. After luncheon our friends the Chinamen strolled up to our camp with a view of ascertaining our plans, but we kept on the defensive in a most Machiavellian way. Their curiosity was otherwise satisfied, for there was hardly a thing in our tents they left untouched, some of them going so far as to feel the ladies' skirts, buttons, and boots. The excuse they gave for paying us this visit was to learn whether we had spent a comfortable night. They professed to apologise for not being able to supply us with a guide, and took roundabout turns with that object, such as: Our Emperor lives on very good terms with yours, and we are quite ready to comply with your wishes, but . . . etc. Here Mrs. Littledale thought it might be the best opportunity for securing the silver belt already described. She offered the man 60 roubles for it, and we produced sixty new silver coins, hoping to entice him into the bargain, but he was not acquainted with Russian money, or at least appeared not to be, and sent to his *yourt* for a pair of scales in order to weigh the metal. When he had carefully weighed it he appeared to suggest that it might not be all silver, and that there might be lead inside,

whereupon we said he could cut one in half to assure himself of the contrary. Evidently he did not consider us trustworthy customers. Finally he said he would not part with his belt for less than 57 Chinese oulans (114 roubles), but as Mrs. Littledale refused to give such a sum he brought it down to 100 roubles.



A TAME YAK.

While this was taking place the others had each caught hold of something in the tent, examining every article with the greatest interest; the camera seemed to frighten them, and when Littledale pointed it towards them they all made a sudden rush backwards. After this decisive trial of their standing powers they took leave of us and departed. A few minutes later a special messenger from the Kha

brought me a tin of tea as a present from His Excellency, saying that the Emperor of China and a few favoured mandarins were the only people who had ever tasted such a beverage. I immediately sent Nicholas to present the Governor, on my behalf,



LITLEDALE TRYING THE YAK.

with a pair of field-glasses and a Waterbury watch. Thus ended our dealings with the *karaoul* officials. The evening was lovely, the hills in the distance were covered in a dark blue mist, and the undulating steppe around us reflected the bright red hue of the setting sun. As we were dining one of the natives came up

to us with his tame Yak, offering his services for our journey ; Littledale politely declined them, though not before he had tried the animal, which refused to advance a step. Joseph turned up at 6 p.m. with stores, but our expectations were not realised in regard to letters—he had found none at Kosh-Agatch. On the following morning we lifted camp at 9 a.m. towards the Bain - Khairkhan range, whose lofty *plateaux* seemed to promise fine hunting-grounds.

CHAPTER V.

March to the Suok River—Camp at foot of Bain-Khairkhan Range—
Suok Valley—Wild Sheep seen—An unsuccessful Stalk—Antelopes
seen—Sand-grouse—Wolves—Plover—Grayling fishing—Snow-cock
—Littledale's success—More Stalks—Shift Camp—Russian Merchant
—March by Kobdo River—Hares—Marmots—Horses footsore—
Kirghis Yourts—Marmot Skins—Crossing Tchagan-Kol River—
Chinese Karaoul—Valley of the Sumdairik—Muss-Taou Range—
A new Guide.

OUR departure from the *karaoul* on the morning of July 3rd must have produced somewhat of a sensation at the Chinese post, for the Governor had refused his permission till our passports had been duly examined at Kobdo, deeming it impossible for us to continue our route without the guide we had so unsuccessfully applied for. Our caravan passed solemnly by the side of his *yourt* on its way down the Boro-Burgassy stream, but the old gentleman made no apparent objection to our advance, and his passive opposition showed itself only by his not bidding us farewell.

Our intention that day was to make a short march to the Suok River, and pitch camp by its side. The country we crossed was barren and sunburnt; it was

an undulating steppe on either side, and presented the aspect of a geographical map for the blind. The higher grounds of the Tchagan-Burgaza were now hardly visible in the distance behind us; in front rose, a few miles ahead, the range of hills known as the Bain-Khairkhan, which we were so anxious to investigate, whilst to our left ran a series of low tablelands, which I explored later on, and found several rams. These were the Beliou mountains.

Three hours brought us to the junction of the Boro-Burgassy and Suok rivers, where we pitched camp at noon after a short march of twelve miles. The wind blew furiously, which greatly hindered the erection of our tents. We now found ourselves nearly at the foot of the massive range we intended to inspect on the morrow.

The valley of the Suok, bordered on the southwest by the Bain-Khairkhan lofty crest, was more a wide, flat steppe than a valley. The Suok water was clear and promising for Grayling, the current slow, owing to the gentle slope of the ground. It was here that, for the first time, the exceeding dryness of the climate showed its effects. The bed-poles broke in twain, and we had much difficulty in finding timber to replace them. Luckily we discovered a small clump of trees, the only one within many miles,

mostly pine and larch, growing in a ravine on the opposite slopes, and immediately despatched Taba with an axe to bring back two or three of the straightest ones which might serve our purpose. He succeeded in a most intelligent manner, and we were soon in possession of a couple of poles which were ultimately worked into shape. But these had to dry, and it was some days before they were fit for use. Meantime we had to strap the broken ones together as tightly as possible. Rain poured down the whole afternoon. There was no fuel to be obtained on the spot, and our dinner that night consisted of dried "Julienne" and tinned tongue. On the following morning, at 3 a.m., Littledale and I started for the hills. We crossed the river, which we found easily fordable close to camp, and on reaching a small *plateau* half-way up, separated in different directions.

In three hours we found ourselves on the table-land, about 1,500 feet above camp-level. Although our tents appeared to stand at the very foot of the range, yet so deceiving was the distance over the steppe, that the hills seemed gradually moving away from us as we advanced over that endless plain. On our way we came across several herds of antelope, probably *A. gutturosa*, and here for the first time we

also met with antelopes of a much smaller species, which my Kalmuks called "*Sulte*." They would start at a few hundred yards from us and jump for some time on the same spot like india-rubber balls before dashing off at a tremendous pace. I do not know that this curious little animal has ever been described before, and am sorry that, being intent on shooting sheep, we did not endeavour to secure one or two specimens. We did not see any of them beyond the Suok steppe, in the valley of the Kobdo, nor on the Kosh-Agatch plain, where, however, on our return journey, we bagged several of the larger antelope. I should estimate the height of the smaller species to be about twenty inches at the withers, roughly speaking, and the coat was of a dark brown hue, growing lighter under the stomach.

When we had finally crossed the dreary steppe we began ascending one of the numerous parallel ravines leading up to the higher grounds, and our ponies found it by no means easy to toil up the steep marshy slopes. There was no avoiding it, however, and at 6 a.m. we landed on a broad *plateau*, from which a promising sheep country came into view. Two or three heads of wild sheep strewn the ground, and gave us hopes of success. Here we drew lots, Littledale and I, and parted on our

exploring trip, fortune sending me to the right, whilst my companion took the opposite direction. The scene in front of us was a wild and desolate one; long arid tablelands succeeded each other in the distance; occasional rocky boulders springing out of them broke the monotony of the view, whilst deep corries with precipitous banks of rolling stones divided the *plateaux* from one another. Small streams trickled at the bottom of the ravines, with patches of grass on either side, and wide stretches of snow melted fast under the rays of the rising sun, the whole conveying the impression of a drawing in black and white. Not a creature was in sight save a few Plovers, which fluttered round us, endeavouring to draw our attention from their nests, and a herd of Yaks, which had been abandoned on the high grounds for summer grazing by some stray Kirghiz tribe. As we advanced on horseback they suddenly took fright, and started off in a frantic gallop with the noise of a charge of cavalry. Neither Taba nor my other Kalmuk knew anything of the country, and the word "*Belbess*" ("I do not know") was the constant answer to my questions. We rode on in this manner for some time, crossing several lateral corries, spying on our way, and finally dismounted at the edge of a steep descent in order to

inspect more carefully the ground before us. But no game was visible, and I was about giving it up when a few grey specks came into the field of my telescope, half an inch above an intervening ridge. Sure enough these were wild sheep at last! Straining my sight to the utmost I managed to make out the large spread of their horns, and counted ten rams lounging in the open, some two miles in front of our position. Taba's face gleamed with joy as he returned my glass, and I could see him anxiously examining the nullah below us, and mentally making plans for the forthcoming stalk. In a moment we got out of sight, descending over the rolling stones, and dragging our ponies after us. There was a noisy dislodging of boulders, and the ponies refused several times to advance, but the sheep were a long way off, and there were no other means of proceeding. This dangerous scramble succeeded after much trouble, and we found ourselves safe in the depths of the nullah. Here we mounted again, following down the stream the best part of a mile so as to get well round the place where we had located the herd, under shelter of the opposite slopes. The question now arose whether we could cross the next ridge unnoticed, and whether the further banks of the second ravine would conceal us from the com-

manding view from the *plateau* on which the sheep were lying. If so, the stalk was possible, for I had detected a hollow which led up to within a hundred yards of them. So we toiled on, but found, on peeping over the summit, that further advance would mean certain failure, for the whole herd was in full sight some 800 yards across the corrie. The rams carried splendid heads, and two of them especially were grand old patriarchs. In this dilemma we decided to retrace our steps, and try the same ridge further down the valley. Taba led the way back in good order, and another half a mile lower down we crossed the ridge, as we had expected, under cover. We now entered a wide grassy nullah, which I first carefully inspected, and, on seeing no sign of the sheep, we made straight for the opposite side, where a long ravine ran up to the very edge of the *plateau* on which they were lying. But "there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip." I had decided to leave the ponies at the bottom of the valley with my "second horseman" and go on with Taba. As we were half-way down the slope the horses showed signs of nervousness, the cause of which was soon explained, for on looking round I saw a Wolf within 40 yards of us, crouching low on a patch of snow, evidently on the warpath. As we

approached, he quietly gazed at us and walked slowly off, apparently disappointed at our interference, and looking reproachfully back at us now and then. This was ill omen indeed, and hardly had we advanced when up sprang, from behind a mass of rock, a couple of ewes, and trotted off in the direction we had chosen for approaching the rams, disappearing at the very point from which I had intended to take my shot! No words can convey an idea of my feelings at that moment. As for Taba, he gave vent to his rage in his usual broken English vocabulary, which by no means helped matters. A faint hope, however, inspired us that the sheep might not have been completely scared away, and that we might perhaps still find them in the neighbourhood. I left the horses by the stream and, together with Taba, followed up the gully in low spirits. The wind was blowing in our faces as steadily as could be, and had it not been for those ewes I certainly should have given my rifle a chance. When we reached the top, however, we found that our precautions were useless, for the sheep had vanished, and we soon stood on the place where they had been lying, evidence of this being afforded by the numerous fresh droppings on the ground. We were now on a lofty *plateau* at the back of the highest

summit of the Bain-Khairkhan range. Snow had by this time almost entirely melted, thus destroying our only chance of discovering the direction which the herd had taken. We carefully examined the ground for a mile round the *plateau*, excepting in the direction from camp, as it was getting late, and ten miles separated us from the Suok River. But though we used our glasses with the utmost care, inspecting every corner in the depths of each nullah, there was no game to be seen; the sheep had vanished like ghosts. We accordingly decided to retrace our steps, and, mounting our steeds, reached the tents just before darkness had set in. I found Littledale busily engaged in fitting the new bed-poles. He had come across a few ewes, but had returned empty-handed. He was convinced that the ground allotted to him was not worth visiting, and proposed that before shifting to new quarters he should have a try the following day at the herd I had so unexpectedly come across. Moreover, Mrs. Littledale was suffering from a bad headache, and we accordingly decided upon another day's rest before starting for the Muss-Taou range. My wife had been fishing in the stream and had caught a few Grayling, thus giving us a change in our customary bill of fare, which invariably consisted of pea-soup

or Maggi's *consommé*, mutton, and tinned fruit. Littledale was off early next morning, whilst I remained in camp with the ladies. The heat was simply overpowering, my thermometer showing 120 degrees in the shade. I stopped the whole day in our tent, sheltering from the scorching rays of the sun. The extraordinary variation of temperature in these regions is worth noting. Within five or six hours it fell from 130 degrees *above* to 3 degrees *below* zero; as soon as the sun sets the altitude begins to tell, and it may freeze at any moment.

Towards evening we anxiously expected Littledale's return, but at 9 p.m. there was no sign of him, nor of Taba who had accompanied him, and when we awoke next morning at six there was still no Littledale. Ultimately, however, at 7 a.m. three horsemen appeared in the distance, and great was our relief when we recognised our companion riding in front with a decidedly triumphant air, for there sure enough we made out a magnificent ram's head tied at the back of Taba's saddle. Littledale forthwith gave us an account of his twenty-eight hours' outing in the hills. He had found my herd a couple of miles beyond the ill-fated *plateau* in a small nullah in the only direction I had failed to examine, and had succeeded in approaching them late in the afternoon,

not before he had realised the actual size of the two largest rams. One of these had then fallen to his rifle, and the horns measured, as taped on the spot, $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches in girth at the base, 60 inches length along the curve, and 40 inches from tip to tip. The other he thought was a still more massive head, though perhaps shorter in length, and he strongly advised me to start off directly and make an attempt to secure it, as the animals, he said, had not been greatly frightened by his single shot. The reason he had stayed out all night was that darkness had set in while he was in a steep gorge, and he found himself shut up in a *cul-de-sac* amongst inaccessible rocks, where further advance was out of question both for men and ponies. He had accordingly squatted down with his hunters under a protruding ledge and waited for dawn. A small bit of chocolate divided in three had constituted their evening meal; but their spirits were kept up by the day's success. On hearing of the possibility of coming across the other large ram I decided to take my chance without delay, and started at 7.30 with Taba, who was most anxious on my behalf, and who, though he had spent the whole night in the open, insisted upon accompanying me. But this hurried departure was doomed to be a failure. We covered that day miles and miles of

country, and rode far beyond the *plateau* where I had first spied the sheep, until we reached a wide, grassy valley, where we found several herds of ewes grazing at leisure, but no rams. We passed the very spot where Littledale had killed the day before, hardly a mile from where I had seen the animals lying, and I was highly disgusted at my bad luck. We returned to camp at 7 p.m., after twelve hours' continuous riding, without having caught sight of anything worth a shot.

Thus ended our sport over the Bain - Khairkhan hills. The result was small, but satisfactory, the trophy obtained being that of the largest *Ovis ammon* yet on record, and the second best during the whole trip. Next morning, July 7th, camp was lifted, and a general start was made down the Suok valley with the object of pitching tents if possible at the junction of that stream with the Kobdo River. Our Chinese interpreter, Daniel, who was acting as guide, had come up to me the night before saying that he thought I might find sheep in the lower mountains above the left slopes bordering the Suok steppe, and volunteering to take me to a fine nullah in the Beliou range, thence bringing me on to our next camping place. He added that we could just manage to do it in a day, and I naturally assented to the pro-

position. Littledale made no objection, and said he would manage the march, so accordingly I started at 3 a.m. with Daniel, who was dressed in a conspicuous red coat, and Littledale's hunter, Lepet, poor Taba being done up with the hard work of the previous day. On our way across the steppe we met with several herds of Antelope, both of the larger and smaller kind. They would let us approach to within 400 yards and then start off at a great pace, coursing round us, and stopping at times to watch our proceedings. A couple of hours brought us to the foot of the hills, when we began ascending a narrow gully, which gradually widened as we advanced, and eventually turned into a broad stretch of stony tableland. It was a bright, sunny day, too bright in fact for easy stalking, and the heat was already making itself felt at 7 a.m. as we came into likely ground and dismounted. Numbers of Hares, startled by our presence, ran in front of us, and the shrill whistle of the Marmot alone broke the silence of the morning. We were now at an altitude of about 9,000 feet above sea-level; the hills presented an aspect of rolling boulders, covered with shingle and occasional patches of grass. To our left rose a huge mass of rocky pinnacles with perpendicular cliffs some hundred feet high, at the foot of which lay traces of snow. Before

us we discovered a broad valley affording good pasture grounds, and at the bottom of it flowed the Beliou stream due eastwards. I now advanced towards it with Lepet, both of us spying carefully as we moved on, and leaving our friend Daniel, with his bright red stalking jacket, in charge of the ponies. He seemed highly disappointed to be left behind, but I explained to him that his conspicuous array would considerably handicap us, and might compromise the success of our stalk in case we came across game. But he was not to be thus despised, and would keep following us at a distance on the plea that he was responsible for our safety. On reaching the edge of the *plateau* the whole valley came into view, and Lepet immediately pointed out to me a lot of seven rams, lying in a corrie about 800 yards below us. Seeing us suddenly squat down, Daniel, totally unable to restrain his impatience, crawled up to us in order to have a peep for himself, and I had to keep him low by sheer force, for he moved his head up and down in a most careless fashion, which threatened to attract the sheep's attention. I saw that two of the rams carried good heads, and were worth trying for, but the open ground on which they lay prevented further advance. Just as I was considering our next move the animals got up and started off at a gallop. I was

convinced that they had seen Daniel, and was about to give vent to my feelings, when Lepet assured me that they were only shifting to cooler quarters for shelter from the scorching rays of the sun, under the rocks I had previously noticed. I was disposed to believe him, for though they ran fast they did not behave like frightened animals, which generally after a sharp gallop suddenly halt to take breath and look round in the direction of the intruder, and then gallop off again at full speed. They never turned once, and it became evident that they were making for the rocks. But we should now have to find their hiding-place. When they had disappeared over a ridge we decided to mount our ponies and proceed down the corrie and up to the place where we had lost sight of them, leaving the horses again below the ridge. The ravine we had to negotiate was a difficult one owing to the rolling stones, and at places soft marshy ground, which we had to cross at its bottom. Seeing that this was too much for the ponies, I dismounted and went on with Lepet. The "red man" was again left behind, and happily this time did not object. At this stage I found that the wind was blowing steadily at our backs, so I suggested a long *détour* which took us an hour to make, and when we reached the top of the next corrie we were on the far side of the

rocky buttresses, among stretches of melting snow. A large bird, reminding one of a Snowcock (*Tetrao-gallus*), fluttered away in front of us, followed by seven or eight young ones. I asked Lepet what it was called ; he answered "*Ullar*" in a whisper, for no hunter took greater precautions on the war-path than Lepet. On advancing a little further I soon found the sheep, lying about 500 yards away to our left, and began crawling towards them on all-fours. But there was no approaching them, for the boulders presently grew scarcer, and an open slanting slope extended in front of us. So I waited amongst the larger rocks, trusting to fortune. One of the rams, the only one I could now see, got up, and slowly stretching his limbs walked in our direction, and disappeared in a dip of the ground. Again I waited, expecting every moment the sight of a pair of horns emerging within shot ; but nothing came, and, growing impatient, I crept on, after taking Lepet's advice. On reaching in this manner the edge of the hollow, I found no sign of game ; the herd had moved away ! Here Lepet caught me by the arm and pointed to our right. Sure enough there were three sheep, some 400 yards below us, playing and fighting, and evidently making for a perpendicular rocky wall which separated us from them. Two were young

males, the third a fine old ram. Whether these were a fresh lot, or part of the herd we had discovered in the morning, I could not tell. As soon as they were hidden from view we rushed, Lepet and I, towards the cliffs. My companion was confident we should find them, though I rather doubted it, as they did not seem to me inclined to settle down. As we reached the edge of the precipice we began peering carefully over into the depths below, and Lepet suddenly stopped like a statue, beckoning to me to move forward; but I had hardly time to come up when out of the crags dashed the three rams in wild confusion some hundred yards beneath me. A running shot was my only chance. By the time I took my aim and fired at the biggest sheep he was fully 150 yards off, and great was my amazement when I saw him stagger for a second and, considerably slackening his pace, walk slowly away, whilst the two younger rams halted and kept looking back, apparently waiting for their superior. But the poor old fellow was very weak, and soon lay down in a hollow. "*Jakshi, baalou*" ("Bravo, wounded"), said Lepet with a triumphant smile, as he sat down to watch the animal through his glass. The others had now abandoned their comrade to his fate. I could plainly distinguish from where I was his shoulders

and head, which he swayed from one side to another, feeling evidently restless and uncomfortable. Leaving Lepet in his commanding position, I scrambled down the steep cliff and advanced along the *plateau*, keeping out of sight of the beast. It took me half an hour to creep within range of him. As I looked back I could see Lepet on the sky-line intent upon my proceedings, and thereby gathered that everything was right, when suddenly the sheep got up and gave me an easy broadside shot. A second after he fell motionless to the ground. I found him to be an old veteran of his kind. His horns taped fairly well (51 inches length by $18\frac{1}{4}$ inches girth), though both tips were unfortunately broken off. To my astonishment Daniel made his appearance with the ponies before Lepet had time to come up. The rascal had been unable to subdue his sporting proclivities, and had been stalking on his own account, thus running the risk of spoiling all. He congratulated me so warmly that I refrained from giving vent to my discontent, and we shook hands in a most friendly manner. When my hunter arrived we joined our efforts to grallock the dead ram, and cut him up in quarters. Daniel with his red gown, tucked-up sleeves, showing his blood-smeared arms, presented the dismal look of an executioner in the Middle

Ages; the fatal axe would have completed the picture. Having packed the meat and head of the *kotchkor* on our saddles, we started at 2 p.m. towards our next presumed camping ground. The heat was almost unendurable as our ponies struggled over the stony tableland and across numerous rocky ravines. On our way we came across the two young rams, still searching for their lost companion, but no others were to be seen. At 6 p.m. we finally caught sight of our tents, low down in the valley, pitched near a broad, marshy stretch, about three miles from the junction of the Suok and Kobdo rivers. We were obliged to make a *détour* in order to avoid getting stuck in the bog, and reached camp as darkness was setting in. The ladies and Littledale greeted my return, and admired my well-earned trophy. The march along the steppe, they told me, had been so trying for the horses, owing to the extreme heat, that they had been obliged to stop before their intended destination, which was the Kobdo River. We sat down to dinner in the best of spirits, little knowing the difficulties that lay before us. This was to be our last successful day for a considerable length of time. A series of long tedious marches up the valley of the Kobdo, through a gameless country, now awaited us, till after many a struggle we decided

to abandon our journey towards the Muss-Taou range, and, turning off northwards, found "fresh fields and pastures new."

On the morning of the 8th of July we struck camp, in spite of our Kalmuk's unwillingness to go further, and mounted our steeds at 7 a.m. We waited till the ponies were duly loaded, and, sending them off in front, followed them up at close quarters. We soon found ourselves on the banks of the Kobdo River, which at that spot attains a width of 300 feet, and is very rapid. Its water was deep and muddy, as we discovered later, owing to its chief tributary, the Tchagan-Kol, which we reached on the following day, and which flows through sandy and clayey soil. Above the tributary the water of the Kobdo was perfectly clear, and afforded capital fishing. As we entered the valley and began ascending its left slope we were agreeably surprised at the sight of small woods bordering the river, consisting chiefly of larch, willow, ash, and abundance of juniper in full bloom. This considerably altered the aspect of the country which had hitherto been dreary and desolate. What with the heat of the day and hard ground, our caravan advanced very slowly. The unshod ponies had gradually worn away their hoofs, and were now most of them footsore. Moreover, our men were

beginning to grumble, and it was all our *demitcha* could do to keep them in order. We were anxious to reach the snowy range at the head of the valley as quickly as possible, but this half-hearted advance was by no means encouraging, and, though we had arranged with the Zaissan at Kosh-Agatch to supply us with a fresh lot of ponies every month, we hardly expected that they would find us in the wilds we were now exploring. According to my forty-verst map, it would take us at least two days to reach the Tchagan-Kol, or Ak-Kol, River (both "Tchagan" and "Ak" meaning white in Mongol), but, to our great astonishment, we found ourselves on its banks that very evening after crossing a long steep pass, and having covered a distance of about twenty miles from the Suok River. Evidently the map, our main guide, was as unreliable as our friend Daniel, who now confessed that his knowledge of the country was confined to the caravan route to Kobdo town. There was practically no path, and the ascent up to the pass in the afternoon was a hard pull for our pack-horses, several of which straggled behind, and had to be repeatedly reloaded. On reaching the top a broad swamp, produced by the junction of the Tchagan-Kol and Kobdo rivers, came into view. The former flowed through a wide and arid

alkali steppe, whilst the latter was concealed by numerous clumps of trees and bushes growing along its banks on either side. In the middle of the plain stood a couple of Kirghiz *yourts*, in which lived a tradesman who was on his annual summer tour, gathering marmot skins from the natives. We decided to pitch camp by the side of these *yourts*, and cross the Tchagan-Kol on the morrow. Some of our packs came in very late, and it was close upon 7 p.m. when we finally settled down. Next morning as I came out of my tent at 5 a.m., after a restless night, our *demitcha* let me understand through Nicholas, the Russian interpreter, that the men flatly declined to go any further. He said that their ponies had been mercilessly overworked, that their backs were sore, that the few sheep, the only remnants of former prosperity, had been devoured by wolves during the night, and that the river was altogether unfordable. This was indeed a piece of rebellion. Littledale and I would hear nothing of it. We promised them a short march that day, and said that all those difficulties would be easily overcome by us, who were "mighty white chiefs," and that no power could stop us. The *demitcha* then confided to us that the instigator of the whole movement was one of the Kalmuks who had deserted from

China into Russian territory, and that if he was caught by the Celestial authorities he would be sentenced to death. Whereupon I had him called up, and told him that so long as he remained with us and served us faithfully we should protect him against the Chinese



WAITING FOR THE PACK-PONIES.

Emperor himself. As for the horses, I said, they would soon recover while resting in a permanent camp, and food would be supplied to the men somehow or other. This seemed to have a cheering effect on them, especially as we expected to find a Kirghiz encampment a few miles higher up, where we could buy some sheep. We struck camp accordingly at

7 a.m., and soon found ourselves on the low banks of the Tchagan-Kol River. It was about 150 feet broad at that place; the water was high and muddy, and the current strong. I suggested trying to find a ford, but the Marmot-skin dealer, whom we consulted, assured us that it was impossible to cross the river at that time of year, and that, unless we went up to its very sources, we should find no available ford. In this dilemma we risked not only losing our prestige, which we were continually obliged to maintain in order to influence our men, but also having to turn back and abandon the Muss-Taou hunting-grounds. Having no portable boat with us, the only plan was to build ourselves a raft of some kind. Littledale had had some experience of this kind during his journey through Tibet, and decided that we should make use of our waterproof sheets and bed-poles for the purpose. To our Kalmuk's amazement we accordingly set to work. Little Taba was the first to understand what we were about, and, together with Cristo, Gabriel, and Nicholas, greatly contributed to ensure success. The other men watched passively, now and then shrugging their shoulders, which was equivalent to saying, "You will never get over that job." In a couple of hours the frame was practically ready; it consisted of our

bed-poles lashed together in the form of a square, and tightly bound at the corners. A large waterproof sheet, which we used as the floor of our tent, was then attached to this square frame as firmly as possible ; the bottom was strengthened by several



PREPARING TO CROSS THE TCHAGAN-KOL.

other waterproofed canvas sheets, and a long bit of rope was attached to each of the opposite corners of this improvised ferry, one end of which was taken over to the farther side by two Kalmuks, whilst the other end remained on the left bank, and served to haul the boat back after each voyage. This ingenious contrivance was completed by noon, and

the question then arose how this extemporary vessel would stand the force of the current. Littledale, who had been chief engineer, got in first, after final instructions to the men on the other side whose business it was to pull the raft across ; but just as



MRS. LITTEDALE AND THE AUTHOR CROSSING THE TCHAGAN-KOL.

he was reaching mid-stream (they either pulled too hard or the boat was badly balanced) water flowed in over the sides, and our companion had to be hauled back, submerged almost up to the waist. The next voyage, however, proved more successful, for the weight of the luggage steadied the vessel,

which alighted safely some fifty yards lower on the opposite bank. The whole of the caravan and *impedimenta* crossed the Tchagan-Kol in this manner, and the horses swam over without incident. But this occupied the whole day, and it was not until



A SMOOTH PASSAGE.

6 p.m. that we found ourselves safely on the other side. We pitched camp close to the river, and forthwith hung all our sheets and bedding out to dry. The Kalmuks looked at us now with the greatest possible respect, and grumbling ceased for a time.

On the following morning, July 10th, we started at 7 a.m. up the Kobdo River again, leaving the Tchagan-Kol behind us. The water in the Kobdo was now perfectly clear, and looked promising for Grayling. Along the river banks the vegetation was rich and beautiful. We passed through sunny glades, amongst shady groves of pine and willow. The grass was tall and wonderfully green, whilst flowers of every description and colour completed the smiling picture. It was a pleasant change to us, as we followed gaily the windings of the stream, and enjoyed the verdure of this oasis. The hills on either side were mostly barren, with occasional small larch woods, their altitude not exceeding 8,000 feet. At 1 p.m. we reached a small meadow on the very banks of the river, and decided to halt there for the night, after having covered a distance of about twenty miles. Our pack-ponies had picked up a little during this comparatively easy march over soft grass, and it was a welcome sight to watch them come in one after the other, neighing joyfully as they were being unloaded, and rolling on the ground in wild contentment. In the afternoon we went out fishing, my wife, Littledale, and myself. This was not merely for amusement, but to supply food for our men, who possessed no more sheep, and were in a constant state of ferment.

Fortunately, though the wind was strong, Grayling were numerous, and appeared to be as hungry as our Kalmuks, for in a couple of hours we returned to camp with sixty fish, averaging three-quarters of a pound, which we distributed amongst the men. These fish rose to any kind of fly, and afforded capital sport. As for animal life, the surrounding country seemed entirely void of game of any sort.

Next morning we were off again at 6 a.m. The Littledales started before us, but we soon caught them up at a sharp turn of the river, where perpendicular rocks barred further advance. The valley had been gradually growing narrower till it formed a gorge with sheer cliffs on both sides. There was no visible path, and the rocks prevented an inland *détour*. After careful inspection, we decided that the only means of surmounting the difficulty was to tie each pony separately to a long rope and swim them round the projecting rock one after the other, whilst Littledale and I clung to the rock with one hand and held tight to the rope with the other, thus seeing the horses round to a safe landing-place. There was hardly any foothold, and we several times just missed an involuntary bath. Some of the horses, on being pushed into the stream by our men, refused energetically to advance, and struggled so violently that their packs came off, occasioning

double work in reloading them. A Kalmuk lost hold of the rope while swimming one of the ponies, and the latter was immediately carried away down stream, and eventually secured some hundreds of yards lower down, with my wardrobe thoroughly drenched. It took us over three hours to get the whole caravan on the other side, and we fervently hoped that no similar straits would ever befall us again.

We pitched camp a few miles higher up, on the banks of the Kobdo, at an altitude of about 7,000 feet, after a short but exciting march. The valley was now much narrower, and woods were growing scarcer. Now and then, at turnings of the river, we could catch an occasional glimpse of shining, snow-clad peaks far ahead of us, the sight of which made our hearts beat quicker. Yet we knew not what lay before us, and insurmountable obstacles might still prevent us from reaching our eagerly sought for destination. Towards evening we returned with over one hundred fish, which we proceeded to hand over to the *demitcha*, whose duty it was to distribute them as fairly as possible amongst our Kalmuks. Here again a misunderstanding took place, presumably owing to favouritism on his part, and some of the caravan men threatened to leave us. This, however, had no effect upon us, for we knew that, besides running short of

food, they would have to find their way back alone, which was no easy matter, having advanced so far into unknown country, and these facts we impressed upon them as forcibly as we could.

Just as we were sitting down to our frugal evening meal Nicholas came up, saying that two Kirghiz men had been sighted, and were riding in our direction. We decided to seize the opportunity and secure them as guides. But we were doomed to disappointment, for Kirghiz "slimness" remains unrivalled among Asiatic tribes. The two men presently came up to our tent, and appeared frightened at our presence. The striking feature of their costume was undoubtedly the tall, red heels of their top boots, fully four inches long, which showed that it was more their habit to ride than to walk. They wore long, greasy frocks, lined with sheepskin, and low fur caps. Their faces bore an expression of astonishment, though their eyes betrayed cunning. When we explained to them through our interpreter that we wanted them to accompany us to the Muss-Taou hills, they flatly declined to do anything of the kind, saying that they had pressing business to attend to, and that it was too far out of their way; whereupon we gave them to understand that their services would be handsomely rewarded by us. This, of course, led them to suppose

that we could not do without them, and they suggested that they might perhaps be tempted by such ridiculously high wages that we forthwith put an end to the interview by telling them they were no longer wanted, though not before we had ascertained from them that there were large herds of Kirghiz sheep at the head of the valley. This was our first meeting with representatives of the Kirghiz tribe, and I must own that we found them to be the cleverest race we had as yet come across. No wonder the wretched Kalmuks are afraid of their influence, and avoid them in every possible way. We ascertained afterwards that the two men had returned late in the evening, having agreed to our conditions, but that they had met with a spiteful reception on the part of our Kalmuks, whose sole aim was to prevent our advance.

On the following morning we made an early start, and after an hour's march reached the junction of the Kobdo River with its tributary the Sumdairik. We were now in an awkward dilemma, and had to consider whether we would continue our journey up the main river, whose valley was becoming narrower and consequently difficult to negotiate with pack-ponies, or turn up the Sumdairik stream where it was easy going, and, making a *détour*, join the Kobdo at its sources. Our caravan men only answered our

questions by their usual negative expressions of "*Iok*" and "*Belbess*" ("No," and "I do not know"). After some hesitation we chose the latter alternative, which, fortunately, proved a success; for hardly had we advanced a few miles, when we came across a Chinese soldier, whom we proceeded to "commandeer" as a guide, and who announced the pleasant fact that we were in the vicinity of a *karaoul*. Although scared by the number of strange faces round him, he undertook to accompany us to the Chinese post, which it took us scarcely an hour to reach. The valley of the Sumdairik, which we followed for a few miles, resembled, like that of the Suok, a broad, flat steppe rather than a valley. The ground at places was white with Edelweiss flowers under our horses' feet, elsewhere it was sandy and barren. Low undulating hills rose on either side and joined at the head of the stream, forming an amphitheatre, covered with larch woods, at the bottom of which stood, sheltered on all sides, half a dozen dirty *yourts* above a fairly large lake. This was indeed a discovery, for my map entirely ignored both the *karaoul* and the lake. One of the *yourts* was slightly cleaner and larger than the others, and, as usual, conspicuous by several yellow flags fixed into a palisade round it. This was evidently the head official's abode. As we passed the

karaoul all the inhabitants, fifteen or twenty men and women, rushed out in their rags to have a look at the new-comers. We pitched our camp, after having carefully chosen our ground, a couple of hundred yards above the Chinese post, at an altitude of 7,900 feet. The Kha soon appeared with his escort and bade us welcome; he seemed a much less important man than the Suok Governor, being adorned with few coral beads on his cap, but no peacock feather. He asked for our passports, which he was apparently unable to read, for he handed them over without perusal to his clerk, who returned them to us with a pleasant smile. Educated Chinese clerks naturally acquire great influence over their village, and practically rule the country, exacting illegal tributes from the wretched Mongols, and often sharing the spoils with "His Excellency the Governor." The official at this *karaoul* was much more willing to help us, probably owing to his more humble condition, and we were soon supplied with a native who knew the surrounding hills, and who was to act as our guide, at the moderate fee of eight roubles per month. He came to our tents in the afternoon, and we learnt from him that wild sheep were by no means numerous on the Muss-Taou range, and that he considered the country round Lake Dain-Kol to be much richer

in game. Yet the grounds we had been endeavouring to reach for the last week seemed to us so attractive from afar, that we decided to march on to the head of the river Kobdo. As for the Dain-Kol district, it was so much out of our way, in a



"TANNY" RATting.

southern direction, that taking into consideration the bad condition of our ponies and the constant opposition of our Kalmuks, we deemed it advisable, in case of failure on the Muss-Taou, to shift northwards and carefully explore the spurs of the Altai, between the sources of the Tchagan-Kol River and the Siberian frontier. In addition to our new guide

the Kha sent us on the following morning, as we were proceeding to lift camp, one of his soldiers as a guard of honour. This Chinaman was clad in a bright yellow frock with a patch of embroidered white silk sewn on to it both on his breast and back, which made us give him the nickname of "the target." He proved of no use whatever, and, having accompanied us half-way to the Kobdo lakes, we sent him back with gratitude to his native post.

CHAPTER VI.

Sources of Kobdo River—Lakes—Fishing—Muss-Taou Hills—Journey northwards—Nicholas sent for Sheep—Sumdairik River Camp—Meat at last—Fresh Ponies expected at Tchagan-Kol River—March on 16th of July—No Sport—Fresh Ponies and Men arrive—More Marches—Moraine of old Glacier—Crossing the Tchagan-Kol back—Camps—Snowstorm—Littledale finds Wild Sheep—Joseph sent for Stores—Olonur Valley—Snow—July 23rd—Shooting—Game at last—Antelope—First sight of Ibex (*Capra Sibirica*)—Stalks with Taba—Littledale brings in a good Ram—Meeting with Zaissan Semion and Kirghiz Chief.

WE left the *karaoul* on the morning of July 13th *en route* for the Muss-Taou Hills. As usual we were delayed by Kalmuk recriminations respecting the ponies, and it was not till 7.30 a.m. that we were ready to start. Our new Mongol guide, whose shabby appearance might conceal, as we hoped, a thorough knowledge of the country, took the lead of our caravan, and after a long ascent we found ourselves at the top of a pass about 8,500 feet high, from which a magnificent view presented itself. Beneath us lay two lakes whose waters were joined by a broad river, the Kobdo, the sources of which

were now before us. The upper lake seemed to me much larger than I had expected, according to the map, stretching westwards to what I thought was over fifteen miles. With regard to these two lakes I cannot do better than quote a passage from Lieutenant Kozloff's observations. This well-known explorer visited these regions the year after our journey (1898) on his way to the Lob-Nor, and his account, which was read at a meeting of the Russian Geographical Society on November 22nd, tallies with the notes I then took there: "My party came to the spot where the Kobdo River forms two small lakes, on the banks of which there are several Kirghiz encampments. The lower Kobdo lake has an irregular elongated form, stretching 10 miles from east to west, with a width of about $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles. There are in it fifteen islands, of which some are from 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long. The upper lake is connected with the lower by a rapid watercourse 420 feet wide. The upper lake proved much larger than it was supposed to be; its length is about $16\frac{1}{2}$ miles and its width 4 miles; its depth attains 18 fathoms." From the pass where we stood we could plainly distinguish Lake Dain-Kol in the distance due south of us, and on the opposite side of the two Kobdo lakes ran the snowclad Muss-Taou range from north-

west to south-east. Towards noon we reached the river, at the place where it flows between the two lakes, and found it so wide and deep that the crossing of it implied a still more serious undertaking than that



OUR NEW DEMITCHA AND MEN.

of the Tchagan-Kol. We therefore decided to pitch camp on this side of the watercourse and hold a debate in the afternoon on the dilemma which now presented itself. The first question to elucidate was the presence of wild sheep in those mountains, which fact could only be ascertained from our new Mongol

guide, who, alone of the whole caravan, was supposed to have ever visited those regions. Accordingly we had him called up and interrogated him on the subject through our Russian and Kalmuk interpreters. In answer to our inquiries he said that he had spent over two months in those hills catching Marmots, of which he had found great numbers, but that he had never come across any *kotchkor* (wild sheep), which inhabited the eastern spurs beyond Dain-Kol, where he thought we should be likely to get sport. These statements, though perhaps untrustworthy, materially changed the aspect of affairs. We had now advanced so far into Mongolia, overcome numerous difficulties, kept our Kalmuks constantly on the march merely by promises of a permanent camp—all this with the sole view of exploring the Muss-Taou range, and now that we were within a few miles of it, we discovered that it was useless to attempt it. Moreover, the hills themselves did not now seem so attractive as they did from a distance. Their slopes were covered with pine and larch woods, and the rocks above appeared to be more suited to Ibex than to Sheep, for no grassy rolling knolls so attractive to the latter could be seen through our telescopes. The Dain-Kol district was entirely out of the question. It was out of our way to the south, and would mean another month through

a country where it was doubtful if there were sheep, with home-sick men and worn-out ponies. In addition to all this we ran the risk of being snowed in by the closing up of the passes back into Siberia, and a winter in a Chinese *karaoul* was by no means a pleasant prospect. We also intended to devote the end of August and part of September to shooting Maral and Roe-deer in the wooded regions of the Altai before returning to Europe. Besides, we had run short of meat, and were obliged that very evening to send Nicholas and another man to one of the Kirghiz encampments on the shores of the upper lake in order to buy a dozen sheep. These and other reasons induced us to abandon our idea of exploring the long-coveted Muss-Taou range, and turn our attention northwards, where Taba told us he knew of first-rate ground for Sheep and Ibex. Looking back, after a period of three years, on the circumstances here detailed I now regret that we abandoned our original intentions on the faith of an unknown native; for the other difficulties in our way would have been hardly worth mentioning. But when the moment arrived for decision we all felt, unequipped as we were, that further advance would be foolish. Great were the rejoicings amongst our natives when they learnt that on the morrow we

should be heading towards the Siberian frontier. They never gave vent to regret for so many marches in vain and so much precious time lost; in a second all was forgotten!

The evening of that day, which was to be the culminating point of our expedition, was the loveliest we had as yet experienced. The whole landscape was bathed in the rays of the setting sun. The lakes glittered as if lit up by thousands of sparks reflected through as many diamond prisms, whilst the hills opposite slowly changed their colour from bright red to lilac-grey, with countless intermediate hues, as the sun gradually descended behind them. Presently the rosy tops alone were visible, whilst the lakes below had long ago put out their lights, and the dark blue waves were rolling in before a strong west wind. Before dinner we tried our luck fishing, and caught some fine Grayling, averaging $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., with which we fed the whole caravan. As I have said before, Nicholas was despatched, together with the new guide, to purchase sheep from the Kirghiz tribes in the neighbourhood, and with strict orders to join us beyond the *karaoul* on the Sumdairik River, where we intended to camp. Early in the morning of the following day (July 14th) we started northwards in search of game. Tents were struck with the utmost

celerity now that the Kalmuks knew we were retracing our steps towards "home, sweet home." The weather was bright and fine, though a perpetual wind from the west never stopped blowing. We passed the *karaoul* without calling at the Kha's *yourt*, and followed the left bank of the lake. Then crossing the low saddle we descended into the valley of the Sumdairik,* and pitched camp close to the stream at 1 p.m., after a march of twenty miles. Here we decided *nolens volens* to give our ponies a day's rest. Most of them were exhausted by constant marches, and the place we had chosen for camp was quite an attractive one, in the shade of a small larch wood. Fishing was our occupation as usual, and that afternoon we killed over eighty Grayling. The water in the river was clear and the current strong; large blocks of stone in midstream formed at intervals beautiful deep pools, which afforded capital sport. Fish rose to any fly without distinction, though apparently a combination with red was preferable. During the night Nicholas returned with twelve sheep, which he had bought for two roubles fifty kopecks apiece (about five shillings). He had had some difficulty in finding us, and, being in a hurry

* This is the name given to the river by the Russian Survey. The natives call it "Kara-Adyr."

to overtake us, had been on the move for over thirty consecutive hours. We remained the whole of the next day on the Kara-Adyr (Sumdairik), and started only on the morning of the 16th. It was a most uninteresting and monotonous march in search of wild sheep country. I kept consulting our guide as to the whereabouts of game, but met with the constant reply of *kotchkor iok* (no rams). That day we followed for some time the left bank of the Kara-Adyr River, and, having gone a few miles, turned off to the right. We now began advancing through higher ground and barren, rocky tableland, where the only living creatures were Marmots and Hares. Here my wife, to our amazement, gave us a brilliant display of marksmanship, for she killed a Hare at eighty yards with Littledale's Mannlicher, the betting being twenty to one against her. This was the only incident on our way. We crossed two passes, and at 1 p.m. reached a valley, at the head of which we discovered a row of high ridges westwards and likely ibex haunts. We therefore decided to pitch camp at that place and investigate the surroundings on the following day, notwithstanding our guide's peremptory statement that we should find nothing. We had now been many a day without the chance of a shot, and our bloodthirsty instincts were again roused by

the sight of favourable grounds. We started early next morning, Littledale and myself, at 4 a.m., in different directions ; but our guide's words were to be realised. I ascended the stony slopes of a small nullah, and spied miles of country around me without



JACOB, THE DEMITCHA, IN THE BASHKAOUS VALLEY.

finding a single animal of any kind ; then, crossing another dividing ridge, I met with a similar result in the next valley, and so on till I finally returned to camp thoroughly disheartened. Here we found twenty-five fresh ponies awaiting us. Before entering the Kobdo valley we had despatched a couple of our Kalmuks back towards the frontier, in order to meet

the ponies which we expected, and direct them to their destination, which was the head of the Tchagan-Kol River. Before parting with us these two men had refused to start without arms, saying that "they might have to defend themselves against natives and wild beasts." Hearing this I was stupid enough to lend them my big revolver. When we saw that both the men and ponies failed to turn up, we naturally thought that they had lost their way, and, a few days later, commissioned one of our hunters to find them, wherever they might be. The latter had now joined us with the fresh lot of ponies, and reported that he had come across them wandering somewhere about the Suok Steppe; he had also met the two armed Kalmuks, who declared to him that they were going back to their homes, carrying off my precious weapon as a souvenir!

Littledale came in at about three in the afternoon, reporting that he had seen nothing but tracks of Ibex on very likely ground. He thought it was hardly worth while remaining at that place, and suggested a start for the morrow, especially as Taba promised better ground within a comparatively short distance. That same day a very fine head was picked up, measuring 60 inches along the curve by $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches in circumference at base.

We struck camp on the following morning at 7 a.m. and went for some time down the valley of a small stream in a northern direction. Fresh ponies were of great service to us now, and we decided to make a long march of it. On our way we passed through a deserted place covered with odd-shaped rounded stones, which we took to be the moraine of an old glacier. We also passed on our way a fairly large lake which had probably once been about ten times the size, for we could plainly distinguish the former water-line on the surrounding hills. Most of the lakes in Asia, and especially in Tibet, have that well-defined line above their present level; they appear to be gradually drying away, and in time will become reduced to small pools. Towards midday our caravan reached the broad valley of the Tchagan-Kol River, which we now had to cross many miles above the place where we had had such trouble during our journey up the Kobdo. Here there was an easy ford; its waters were as milky and dirty as below, and it was hardly 150 feet wide at this place. As we forded the river some fine snowclad peaks at the head of the Tchagan-Kol came in sight and made us hesitate whether we should not march up the stream towards the hills, which looked as if they might afford sport. We inquired about it from our new guide, who

answered decisively that there were no sheep about there, so we continued our journey northwards and, having crossed the main river, began ascending one of its small tributaries along a narrow ravine with high banks on either side, and, having gone up a few miles, pitched camp at 3 p.m. The weather was still fine and exceedingly hot.

We were off again next day, starting as usual at about 7 a.m., still heading northwards parallel to the main Muss-Taou range, and crossed a fairly high pass into loftier ground. It rained almost the whole of that afternoon, and we pitched camp on the *plateau* at an altitude of 8,400 feet. On our way we saw Antelope of the larger kind. The end of that day's march cheered us up a little, for, as we entered a narrow valley with a small lake in the middle, many heads of sheep strewed the ground, and it seemed possible that we had struck a new vein. Close to the place where we had pitched camp stood two dirty *yourts*, whose inhabitants were so frightened at the sight of us that they all disappeared behind the rocks on our approach, and did not reappear until next morning. We decided that night that we should start early next day, Littledale and I, to try our fortune, for to the north and north-west rose high mountains and grassy rolling boulders which we had not seen for

a long time. Here grumbling began again amongst our Kalmuks, who threatened to march next day; they had probably been discouraged by the bad weather, and especially by the cold that suddenly came on during the night, for when we awoke next morning the ground was covered with three inches of snow.



"HEADS OF SHEEP STREWED THE GROUND."

Next morning, July 20th, notwithstanding the men's threats, we started at 7 a.m., Littledale and I, in different directions. The snowstorm was so strong at 3 a.m. that there was no question of leaving camp. The wind was blowing a gale from the south-west, and as might have been expected, I returned in the afternoon without having seen even tracks of any

kind. I was thoroughly damped and numbed by cold, having been caught in a very severe snowstorm at the head of a valley. Littledale brought in the meat of a young ram which he had killed for the pot. He had seen two or three young ones, but no good old males had come in sight. From the intense heat which had prevailed during the last few days in the lower country we felt again as if we were in the middle of winter. We now decided to start on the next morning, having sent Joseph to Kosh-Agatch with a letter to our friend the Zaissan Semion, asking him to supply us with fresh men, horses, and sheep at a place which we thought would be a permanent camp, and where Taba now promised we should get good shooting. Joseph was also to bring back stores, of which we were running short. Constant rain and snow accompanied us our whole day's march, but Taba seemed now to know the way, and took upon himself to guide us towards success. We marched down the valley, turning westwards towards the Siberian frontier, and camped at the bottom of a wide valley known to the Kalmuks as the Olonur Valley, at the head of which is the Nam Daba Pass, the Russo-Chinese divide. Apparently on our map the river we camped on was the Karaimaty. We were fairly drenched, as we pitched camp at 11 a.m., rain and

sleet never ceasing the whole day. We were now at an altitude of about 8,200 feet. In the afternoon we caught sight of two men on horseback on the sky-line in front of us. These men presently came up and informed us that the Zaissan was now in search of us not far away with forty fresh horses and ten men. They also intimated that we were within two days' march of Kosh-Agatch. This news was quite a revelation to us, as the map upon which we relied showed a much greater distance. We intended to try our new ground on the following day, but another snowstorm during the night prevented us from doing so, though we were now very anxious to explore the new country round us, especially as Taba appeared to be so confident.

We spent the whole of July 22nd waiting for the weather to clear up; but it was to be another lost day, and fishing in a small lake a couple of miles below camp was our only occupation. Towards evening the weather improved, and next morning, July 23rd, we were awoke at 3 a.m. and started uphill with renewed spirits in different directions, Littledale taking the ground to the west of our camp, whilst I went north-east towards the Siberian frontier. Taba, as usual, accompanied me. He now seemed to know the ground fairly well, and conducted me up the valley

for some time, when turning north we ascended the long grassy slope till we reached a series of *plateaux* with rolling boulders here and there, separated from each other by deep ravines. Snowy peaks could be seen in the distance before us, as well as westwards where Littledale had gone, and where the ground appeared higher than where we stood. At first no animal came in sight but a herd of the larger antelopes. As we advanced along these fine pasture grounds the valleys became deeper and rocks more frequent till, in about a couple of hours, we reached some very likely Ibex ground. From here I could plainly distinguish the hills dividing two great empires and which, according to my idea, were most probably the southern slopes of the Happy Valley. From the place where we now stood we could command a view over a large stretch of broken country, and I soon discovered, on the opposite slopes, nine or ten small brown patches, which I at first took for wild sheep, but which, examined through the glasses, appeared to be a herd of Ibex feeding about a mile away from us. There were six small males and three good heads amongst them. There being no shelter from our side, it was a question of making a very long *détour* in order to get the chance of a shot; but I was very keen to secure a specimen or two of

Capra Sibirica, so we decided to attempt the stalk. We retraced our steps, and, leaving the ponies with the other Kalmuk, I started with Taba towards a range of steep crags, amongst which we thought we might advance in safety ; but the ground became very difficult, and it was a long job to reach the other side of the valley, for there was many a deep ravine between us and the rocky ridge, while the ascents were exceedingly steep. Loose stones were being continually displaced by us, and the india-rubber soles on my shoes were fairly worn out in less than an hour's time. After many a scramble we succeeded in covering the ground between us and the rocks, but here our real difficulties began. We sat down to rest on the top of the ridge, and spied another herd of Ibex, females and young ones this time, over seventy in number, at the bottom of the valley about a mile below us. Leaving them to our right, we went down the crags which from the top seemed quite inaccessible, but, being in full sight of our coveted prey, we could not possibly follow the ridge, which would have been much easier work. About a hundred yards below it, after very careful and dangerous going, we found we were out of sight, but here again numerous long and steep snow-slides had to be crossed. Some of them were fairly wide, and the snow was

still hard from the previous night's frost, so that there was no other means of getting across them but to take a long run and negotiate them by the strength of the impulse, landing on the other side some fifty or sixty yards below. Some of these snow-shoots were fairly twenty yards wide, and the precipice below was by no means a cheering sight. Little Taba was not to be stopped by this, and several times one of these snow-slides divided us, my hesitation making me wait before the decisive rush. In some places the snow had given way, and I could distinguish some yards below long smooth ice cylinders that had been formed round the trickling water, whose hollow murmur might have given a shudder to the bravest mountaineer. At all events the snow did not give way under our feet, and we managed to get over the disagreeable passages with bruised feet and torn rubber soles. Another half-hour up a steep slope, covered with sharp-edged stones and shingle, brought us to a low pass leading into the valley where our Ibex had been spied by us, being within about 400 yards of where we had last seen them feeding. Here we halted to rest. The grassy slope that stretched itself before us contained few hiding-places, and the question now arose whether we should wait for the animals to come towards us



THE ASIATIC IBEX.
(*Capra Sibirica.*)

and hide under shelter of the rocks in the middle of the day (which was the most likely alternative), or to advance as cautiously as possible. The wind being steady, I chose the latter course. We had now been about one and a half hours out of sight of the herd, and it was quite presumable that they had by this time shifted. Instructing Taba to keep a few yards behind, I started creeping up the grassy slope, and very soon found myself within what I thought was shooting range of the Ibex. Two or three minutes' more creeping, and a fine pair of horns showed before me on the sky-line at 200 yards. I had noticed from the opposite side of the valley that one of the old bucks was much lighter than the others, and carried a somewhat finer head, so naturally it was the one I intended, if possible, to secure. Seeing now only a pair of horns, I could not judge to which of the three they belonged, but when, a moment later, their owner got up and gave me a broadside chance, although it was not my light-coloured friend, I could not refrain from taking my shot. Putting up the 200-yards sight, and drawing it as fine as possible, I fired and rolled him over. Jumping up in a second, I just caught sight of them pelting downhill like lightning, and fired a second time at the lighter one but missed him. When they had all disappeared

behind a ridge, we went up to see our quarry, and found him to be a very fair buck, his horns measuring 38 inches along the curve by 10 inches in girth, the wide spread of his horns giving them a larger appearance at a distance. Rewarded at last! This was indeed my first successful day since we had reached the Kobdo River, and both Littledale and I had yearned for a shot. The horns seemed to me to resemble in every way those of a Cashmere Ibex. On inquiring of Taba about their comparative size, I understood him to say that he had seen much larger ones in the district, so that there is every probability that they run to fifty inches and more in length. My little hunter would have it that we should see many more of them before we left. Having grallocked our Ibex and left him with the ponies, we went on in the direction of camp.

The country being still favourable for game we kept on the look-out, but saw no signs of animals of any kind till we reached the bottom of a deep nullah, where Taba suddenly spotted two or three Ibex on the top of a ridge to our left. As it was still early in the day another stalk was imminent. Circumventing the ridge on which we had located the animals, we found ourselves presently, Taba and I, in a small corrie about 600 yards long, up which

we had to toil in order to face the direction in which the Ibex were heading. This took us nearly an hour, and as I was just reaching the *plateau* I suddenly saw a pair of horns coming towards me at less than fifty yards in front ; but unluckily I was quite out of breath, having walked very fast, and instead of waiting, I carelessly took my shot at the only part of the beast in sight, and naturally missed. When I saw him next he was rushing downhill some 150 yards below me, and great was my amazement when I found that this was my light-coated friend whom I had already missed before. As well as I could judge, his horns must have measured well over forty inches. His companion, whom I just caught sight of, was a young buck hardly worth shooting. I was much disgusted at this performance, so was Taba. We sat down to wait for the ponies, which presently came up with the head of the Ibex, and remounting we started back for camp, reaching the tents at 5 p.m. Curiously enough Littledale came back almost simultaneously, bringing with him the head of a fair ram (51 inches along the curve by $19\frac{1}{4}$ girth). He told us that he had come across a herd of sixty rams, almost all with good heads, and another lot of fifteen. These were the largest herds of rams we had as yet seen, and we decided

that this camp should be a permanent one, game being plentiful in the neighbourhood.

I found our caravan greatly increased on my return by the arrival of the Zaissan Semion with forty fresh horses and a dozen Kalmuks with a *demitcha*, who were to replace our men. He had also brought with him a Kirghiz chief, Abduldho by name, whose martial appearance and stately looks made a great impression upon our Kalmuks. In token of friendship he had brought us thirteen sheep as a present, and told us through our interpreter many quaint stories of his nomadic life. He was the hereditary and autocratic ruler over about a thousand Kirghiz, and owned immense numbers of horses, sheep, and cattle. He had been for years past under Chinese rule, and a vassal of the Chinese Emperor, but finding no suitable ground for his purpose on the Celestial side, he had shifted quarters and settled down on Siberian territory, having sent in a petition to the Russian authorities with a view to becoming a subject of the Czar. Apparently, however, his presence was not wanted in Russia, for not only was there no answer forthcoming from the Altai governor, but orders had been given to turn him out of Russian territory, where constant frictions took place between his Kirghiz and the native Kalmuks.

He now applied to me for protection. I said I could do nothing for him, excepting to hand over the paper he gave me to General Boldyreff at Barnaoul. He had brought over with him several of his subjects, one of whom seemed so intelligent that we asked his permission to keep him till we returned to Kosh-Agatch, to which he readily agreed. We found the man very useful and handy in every way. The position of the Kirghiz Khan was naturally a very difficult one, for he now found himself in the dilemma either of returning to China, which was hardly possible under the circumstances, or of remaining in Siberia, where he was not wanted. I trust that by this time the question has been settled in his favour. As for the Zaissan Semion, he seemed to be in very high spirits as usual, and was received by our Kalmuks with great signs of joy and deference. He told us that he had learnt from some stray Mongols that all our horses had died on the way, and that we had been compelled for the past fortnight to march on foot. This news, he said, had made him hurry in search of us, and he was now glad to see that we were not in such straits as had been represented to him. He complimented us on our day's success, and warmly welcomed us back into his territory. The men he had brought, he said, were

thoroughly reliable, and the *demitcha* he promised would be more energetic, and keep the men in better order than the one he had granted us previously. He said he would go to his home on the following day, his duties calling him back, but promised to meet us at Kosh-Agatch, and thence accompany us to his house on the Oulagan River, where he promised us good Maral shooting.

We refrained from reporting to the Zaissan about the constant grumbling that had taken place amongst our Kalmuks, but told him of the two men who had gone away with my revolver. He promised to look into the matter, and said that we should now have no more trouble. We parted with our men that evening, and promised the Kirghiz chief to visit his encampment on our way home, upon which the two chiefs bade us farewell.

As we sat down to dinner in high spirits we talked over the day's events, and turned in early in order to make a start as usual at 3 a.m. on the following morning.

CHAPTER VII.

Olonur Camp—Stalking Sheep—Weather-beaten horns of Maral found—Lake Valley—Hares and Brahminy Geese seen—Joseph returns with Stores—My Wife goes out Stalking—Littledale's Record Head—Thunderstorms—I wound a fine Ram—We shift Camp—Taba's successful Ruse—Unsuccessful Pursuit—Our Camp under the Nam Daba Pass—Stampede of the Pack-horses—A good Stalk on August 2nd—Shift Camp over Frontier—More Stalking—The Tarkhaty River—Kirghiz Encampment with great Herds of Horses—I get a good Ibex—Return to Camp on the Tchagan-Burgaza River.

EARLY on July 24th I was awakened by my faithful Cristo with the good tidings that the weather was fine and that the ponies were saddled. We accordingly started, Littledale and I, after a hasty breakfast, towards the sheep-ground which my companion had inspected on the previous day, and where we found there was sufficient room for both of us. I was anxious to get a glimpse at the herd of sixty rams which Littledale had seen, and perhaps get a shot at a fine old patriarch. Wild sheep had been carefully avoiding me for the previous three weeks, and my eager anticipation of sport may be readily understood. From camp we rode down the main valley

till we reached a lateral one, into which we entered. Great numbers of sheep's skulls strewed the ground, especially under a mass of precipitous rocks, close to which we passed, and where apparently a regular slaughter of wild sheep had taken place. The valley through which we were passing was bordered on either side by low, grassy boulders, with rocky pinnacles here and there, the whole place appearing to afford a capital winter resort for the animals which were probably still on the higher ground just perceptible in front of us. This was our destination. A small stream trickled down the middle of the valley, forming little swamps here and there, through which our ponies had to wade. About a couple of hours brought us to a place where we separated in different directions, Littledale taking the country south, whilst I turned to the right up an easy slope northwards. Old weather-beaten fragments of horns of the Maral lay on the ground in some quantity. These stags had probably frequented the country years ago, and, living in such a timberless region, were easily shot down by the merciless natives. On reaching a low ridge, we came in sight of a parallel valley, rather broader than the one we had just left, with numerous small lakes glittering in the middle of it. The pastures here were as good as could be desired, and

a view of fine stony corries at the head of it promised a successful result to our exploration. But though Taba and I carefully spied the valley for its entire length from the commanding ridge on which we stood, not an animal came in sight ; so we decided to cross it and examine the valley beyond. Here



IN THE WOODED ALTAI.

again we met with similar want of success ; with the exception of some Hares and a few Brahminy Geese on the lakes, nothing was to be seen. Taba suggested we should go straight up to the higher ground and inspect the *plateau*, where the snow was still left in patches from the previous winter. The ascent up the stony slopes proved a very difficult one ; our

horses refused to advance ; so, dismounting, I sent them to the head of the valley, where, at the bottom of an immense amphitheatre of high mountains, lay a larger lake, the shore of which was to be our rendezvous for the evening. An hour's scramble brought us, Taba and myself, to the top of the commanding ridge, from which a broad, stony tableland, gradually sloping away from us, extended for three or four miles. Here we sat down to spy. Presently, with the aid of my Zeiss glass, I made out a suspicious-looking brown speck, then another, then a third, till I could count forty of them some two miles below us. Sure enough these were sheep at last, and very probably belonged to the herd Little-dale had seen the day before. On more careful inspection we found them to be all rams, lying on the *plateau* in open ground. We could not, from that distance, make out the size of their horns, but decided to approach them nearer, under shelter of the crags. The wind was blowing steadily in our faces from the west, which was decidedly in our favour, but the question arose whether we should find any possible way of hiding ourselves on the flat tableland, over which we should have to crawl for at least six or seven hundred yards. We advanced under shelter of the rocks in very broken ground, having now

and then to descend a steep gully, the cliffs in front of us being utterly inaccessible, then climb up again, and so on for a couple of hours, till we reached the end of the ridge, from which we could distinguish the sheep quite plainly. Some of the rams carried magnificent horns, which served to encourage us on our somewhat daring enterprise. We now crept down for some time, and presently found ourselves on the flat grassy steppe upon which the animals were lying. Here we discovered that we could advance out of sight of them without having to crawl, there being a slight depression of the ground where they lay. If by chance one of them had stood up, we should immediately have been discovered. Taba led the way in a most confident manner, halting at places in order to look through the glass, and see whether any bit of horn was visible; but no. All went well for the next half-hour. Two or three hollows, of which we availed ourselves, came in very opportunely, and we soon found it necessary to crawl on all fours, and continue the advance in this uncomfortable manner. We were now, as I thought, within range; but distances on the steppe are so deceiving that we continued in this way for more than another half-hour, moving on as cautiously as we could, without catching sight of the coveted horns.

At this stage I deemed it advisable to leave Taba behind, lying flat on his stomach, and advanced alone, though still the grassy line in front of me was unbroken by any object overlooking it. I was gazing intently in front of me, when suddenly I perceived a movement to my right, and there, within forty yards, stood two or three rams quietly feeding up, and already almost between Taba and myself. This naturally spoiled my chance of picking out the largest, for they might at any moment get a whiff of my wind and be off; in fact, I was now almost in the midst of them. Turning round, therefore, as cautiously as I could, and cocking my rifle, I pointed it in their direction with the intention of choosing my animal as they passed, or, at any rate, of getting my shot at the first alarm. Suddenly one of them lifted his head up, another followed his example, and a third. They had evidently become suspicious, so nothing was to be done but to take my chance. One of them carried a very fair head, and as he was standing broadside-on, I let go at him, and rolled him over; the others disappeared like lightning. Jumping up, I fired at a second as the herd streamed downhill, but the result was a clean miss. In the hustle I was unable to pick out another good head, and, firing at random, saw one

tumble over. When Taba came up, the sheep had already placed a mile between us. My first ram proved to be a fairly good one, though the ends of his horns were, unluckily, broken. Their girth at base taped almost 20 inches; their length along the curve $45\frac{3}{4}$ inches.



"TWO OR THREE RAMS QUIETLY FEEDING."

In the meantime heavy clouds had gathered, and the weather looked threatening, so we hurriedly grallocked the animal, and started back with the intention of sending our Kalmuk with the pony to bring back the head and meat. Rain now began pouring down in torrents, and before we had gone half a mile we found ourselves thoroughly drenched from head to foot; in fact, the rain never ceased for the rest of the day, and when we got down to the Lake Valley and found our ponies, there was no question of sending the man after my booty. The second animal I had dropped was a young one, and not worth bringing back. We reached camp at about 6 p.m., none the worse for the dreadful soaking we had undergone, and found Littledale returned. He had seen only ewes on his ground, about 200 in number. Thus ended my second meeting with *kotchkor*. I had greatly enjoyed an exciting stalk, and had never before found myself so close to them.

The following day I remained in camp, sending a couple of men to bring back the meat of my two rams killed on the previous day, as well as the head of the large one. Though the weather was still inclement, Littledale decided to explore the ground where I had shot my Ibex. The two native chiefs

had left for their respective homes with our old horses and men. Towards evening Littledale came back and reported that he had found a herd of seventeen rams, and had followed them over two or three ridges, but unsuccessfully. The night was exceedingly cold, promising a fine day for the morrow. I consequently started early, on July 26th, with a new hunter, whom the Zaissan had brought with him, and of whom he had given me a good account. My intention was to try to find the herd Littledale had seen on the previous day. We passed over the same rolling hills as on my first attempt from this camp, and on reaching a small river followed it down for about eight miles, then ascending a steep slope, where, according to Littledale's account, he had left the rams. I began spying the country beyond, but though I carefully inspected every corner of the nullah, my glass revealed nothing. On the sky-line to my left, however, and high above us, a moving object attracted my attention; I found it to be a fair ram, and, presuming that there might be others behind the ridge, we started in his direction. The wind was very unsteady, and we were obliged, therefore, to circumvent the hill for a couple of hours in order to get to leeward. Leaving the ponies under a rocky ridge suggestive of Ibex, I continued to

advance, when suddenly, about eighty yards below us, an average-sized ram started up and stood staring at us for some time. Unluckily, he had taken us unawares, and, my rifle being in its case, it took me a few seconds to get ready to fire. While thus engaged, the animal jumped over to another rock, and stopping again gave me a doubtful chance. As I fired he disappeared among the crags, and though we rushed down to the place where we had seen him last, we were unable to find him again. This was indeed aggravating, for I had probably frightened the one we had been following, and on resuming our course we naturally found that he had disappeared. We continued our search over the rolling stones at an altitude of about 11,000 feet, with many ups and downs, examining numerous corries and gullies, with the only result of finding a herd of six young Ibex bucks, which were lying a few hundred yards below us, and which we might have easily approached if they had been worth shooting.

At 2 p.m. we gave up all hope for that day, and started back for camp, which we only reached at six, after a four hours' long and dreary ride. On the way back I found a half-rotten sheep's head of gigantic size, and putting the tape to it I found it to measure 63 inches in length by twenty inches girth.

This was the largest I had ever seen. Littledale had returned with a small head, and reported a herd of about twenty, with one good one, as he thought, but he failed in his stalk.

It rained the whole of the next day, so everyone remained in camp. Towards evening Joseph came back from Kosh-Agatch, but to our great disappointment brought neither letters nor papers. We had instructed him to bring back a good supply of macaroni, as we had run short of vegetables; but instead of that we found several boxes of matches, which had been packed up in similar cases, hence the error—most aggravating to empty stomachs.

The following day the weather cleared up *again*, and at 4 a.m. I was once more on the warpath. This time I turned my attention to the darker-looking hills, which I thought were a continuation of the backbone of the Happy Valley. In these regions I had found both Ibex and Sheep, and there was every reason to believe that I might come across more. I intended to go further this time, and investigate the numerous nullahs I had as yet only seen from afar. As my wife was very anxious to get a shot, Littledale obligingly suggested that he should take her out, and they started together in the direction of the Lake Valley. We actually rode, my hunters and I,

till 11 a.m. without seeing a single animal in any of the nullahs ; but on reaching fresh ground, and following a high rocky ridge, I suddenly heard a shuffle on the snow amongst the boulders below us, and caught sight of two sheep that had jumped out of the rocks and were making downhill. By the time I was ready to shoot they were fairly 200 yards away. Another running shot was my only chance, and as I fired I distinctly saw the larger one stagger, though he only stopped a second and continued his course downhill, and then up again and over the ridge. I naturally rushed across the corrie and reached the place where he had disappeared, only in time to see him pop over the next ridge. It was a desperate chase, and we saw him once more when he was galloping steadily on. The pursuit had to be abandoned, for it was now fairly late in the afternoon, and we had gone away from camp a very long distance that day. Painfully retracing our steps, we were returning home without precaution over the ground we had passed in the morning, and where we had found nothing, when suddenly my hunter pointed out a couple of fine old rams staring at us from a slope above, and presently starting off at a sharp trot. In my state of excitement I decided to follow them, which of course was a very rash

enterprise, for frightened sheep go a long way. I left the ponies behind a small boulder, and hurrying on in their direction found them again a mile further on. They had now quieted down, and were carelessly feeding, though looking back now and again. Leaving my Kalmuk, I crept on behind a row of small rocks, but, alas! the wind was shifty, and I had not advanced half an hour before I saw them start off again. My hopes had gone for that day. I now found myself in broken ground, and had entirely lost the direction from which I had come, so that I was at a loss to know where I had left the ponies. The sheep had engrossed my whole attention, and I had failed to notice my direction, the ground being everywhere very much alike. Strange to say, I could hardly be over a mile away from my hunters, and yet, though I shouted at the top of my voice, I could get no answer. I wandered about in this manner in every direction, and was about giving up the search, when I suddenly found the ponies and men quietly lying down within fifty yards behind the boulder where I had left them. This was not the first time I had found the ground most deceiving in those regions, and I decided henceforward never to be left alone again on the steppe. It was now nearly dusk, and it was not until 9 p.m.

that we found ourselves safely back. Littledale and my wife had just returned. They gave me an account of how they had got within 200 yards of a herd of rams which were already on the move; she had fired five shots at the running animals, but none apparently were hit. Littledale added that he had noticed two or three magnificent heads amongst them, and was most anxious to go out next day in search of them.

Weather being fine, on the morning of July 29th, Littledale and I started towards the higher range to the left of camp. My intention was to try the ground straight ahead over the Nam Daba Pass. On my way, Taba pointed out to me a couple of rams, three or four hundred yards in front of us, of which one was a fine old fellow, whilst the other, a smaller, seemed to be wounded. Creeping up to within 150 yards, further advance seemed impossible, so I took my shot at the smaller animal and ended his sufferings by rolling him over. As this was close to the ground where my wife was shooting the previous day, I concluded that the beast had been wounded by her, and accordingly sent my second man with the head and meat back to camp with the unexpected tidings.

Taba and I then advanced in the direction of the larger sheep, which we found again making off

desperately. Further pursuit was naturally useless, so we turned westwards of the pass, and presently spied five rams standing on a patch of snow, half-way up a stony nullah. The wind being shiftty, Taba suggested we should wait awhile before choosing the direction for the *détour* we should have to make. Unluckily, flies and mosquitoes were very tiresome that day, as we found, and the sheep had evidently retired to the stretch of snow in order to avoid them. I noticed through my glass that one of the five carried a very desirable head, and seeing they would not move, I decided to circumvent them, and come down upon them from above. It took us two good hours to get well round them, and when, creeping down as cautiously as I could, I reached a protruding ledge of rock, from which I thought I should be within range of them, I could see, on peeping over, part of the patch of snow still about 400 yards below me. I therefore crawled on all fours, tearing my hands on the sharp edges of stones, till I found myself within about a hundred yards of the place where we had located them.

At this moment a gust of wind blew down the gully right in our backs, and a second after the five animals came in sight moving downhill. I immediately fired at the best ram as he rushed past

me, but a running shot is always doubtful. Three other consecutive shots were of no avail. As we watched them, however, through our glasses, Taba suddenly shouted, "*baalou*," which means "wounded," and sure enough there was the big fellow struggling to keep up with the rest with one of his hind legs broken. We saw him cross the valley, and, to our great dismay, ascend the opposite slope, and disappear over the ridge. Another chase similar to that of yesterday was our lot. Though we found blood-tracks, and followed them for a couple of miles, we eventually had to give up the pursuit, and returned to camp. The vitality and energy of these animals when wounded is extraordinary. Though the slope was exceedingly steep, and the animal's hind leg was shattered, he never stopped once, but galloped steadily away. I was fated to find that same ram again, wound him once more in the shoulder, and eventually lose him. According to a careful estimate, the length of his horns should have been well-nigh sixty inches. I reached the tents at 8 p.m. in very low spirits. The ladies told me on my return that Littledale had sent in, through his second Kalmuk, a note which he had scribbled down on a flat bit of stone with flint, in the absence of ordinary materials, with the following words: "Wounded big sheep; send small tent and

stores." This was indeed good news. The ladies had ordered the Kalmuk back with the necessary things for a night out.

In the evening we witnessed a Mongolian thunderstorm,—very different to European ones! It seemed as if the end of the world had come. The continued rattling of the thunder, blending with the noise of the gale, and interspersed with long flashes of lightning, combined to produce a terrible, yet magnificent, display not easily to be forgotten.

On the following morning, there being no sign of Littledale, and the sky having cleared, I sent Taba out in the hope that he might find some clue to the whereabouts of my wounded sheep, while I remained in camp in eager expectation. At 4 p.m. Taba returned, after an unsuccessful search. Half an hour later we perceived a small party riding towards us; this was Littledale with his two men. He brought in the finest head of *Ovis ammon* that had as yet been obtained, and it proved to be the record. Its measurements, as taken on the spot, were the following: Length, 63 inches; girth, $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches; from tip to tip, $41\frac{1}{2}$ inches. He gave us a most graphic account of his two days' experiences. He had come across the same herd which my wife had saluted with five shots from his "Mannlicher," and to which

herd belonged the young ram I had finished off for her. He had waited a considerable time before the animals fed into stalkable ground, taking the utmost precaution not to miss the chance of securing the magnificent old ram he had "spotted" with his glass. Having got above them, the whole herd passed below him, and as the large one came up broadside-on, he had fired twice, shattering his hind quarters; but this, he found, was not sufficient to stop him, and as he had only been able to take his shot late in the afternoon, he had decided to spend the night out, and follow him early the next day. The last he had seen of him at dusk, much to his discomfiture, was that, after having lain down several times, he had finally risen and walked slowly over a ridge. Next morning, at dawn, he was found lying some hundreds of yards below the ridge in the next corrie, still alive. He had to stalk him again, and put another bullet into him before he could secure him. The wretched animal must have spent a most uncomfortable night; but such is the vitality of these animals that only a mortal wound will stop them.

Next day we shifted camp westwards. Though I felt much depressed over the last days' failures, I decided to try once more my old ground in an eastern direction, on the chance of finding the two old rams



LITTLEDALE'S RECORD HEAD OF OVIS AMMON.

I had come across there. Little Taba, who again accompanied me, was still confident and sure of success. We were to return in the evening to our next camping-ground, which was to be on the other side below the Nam Daba Pass. On reaching the *plateau*, after an hour's ride from camp, we very soon discovered a grand old ram lying amongst rocks about two miles north of our camp. We thought he had naturally seen us, as his head was turned in our direction, and we were in full sight of him on horseback at about 500 yards. Taba's idea was that he might be my wounded beast, for his mighty horns greatly resembled those of the one I had come across a couple of days previously. According to Taba, the only possible way to approach him was to ride on in full view and slowly drop out of our saddles, whilst his attention would be distracted by the ponies, which were to be led in an opposite direction by my second Kalmuk. This *ruse* was crowned with success, for as we crept along behind the rocks we could see the animal watching the ponies intently as they were being led away. In this manner, and crawling on all fours, I got without difficulty within a hundred yards of his resting-place. As I drew nearer I judged his horns, which were on the sky-line just before me, to be close upon sixty inches, and just as I was pre-

paring to shoot, he started up and gave me a very doubtful chance, of which I availed myself, however, and fired. As he made off I could plainly see that I had smashed his shoulder, and that besides one of his hind-legs was stiff, which confirmed our suspicion that he was our old friend which I had wounded on the 29th. To our dismay he continued moving on at a slow pace, looking round now and again, till he disappeared over a ridge. The ponies had now come up, and we galloped across the corrie as hard as we could go. We came up just in time to see my ram walking over the next ridge. On we went at full gallop, heading towards a mass of rock, under which we hoped he might lie down; but, alas! nothing would induce him to stop, and again we saw him toiling up the opposite slope. He must have noticed our proceedings, and felt that he was being pursued. We then decided to dodge round out of sight of him, and, following up a small stream, meet him before he got to the next ridge, for which he was evidently making. The ponies were now exhausted, but we urged them on, and dismounted close to the bed of the stream. Half an hour brought us to the top of the ridge, below which I soon spied my animal lying on the slope where we had last seen him. Approaching with the greatest caution, I was just

about to fire, when he again rose and started off; but here I was dead beat, and my two shots must have been clean misses. Looking round I saw no sign of Taba; as for the ram, he had trotted across the nullah, and I remained perfectly helpless with my second Kalmuk and the half-dead ponies, who refused to advance another inch. I continued my pursuit, however, and on coming in sight of the next corrie found nothing in it, neither man nor beast. Having spied every bit of ground, I stopped, for further advance was useless. Retracing my steps to the stream I was now in search of Taba, and still hoped that he might bring back good news. On the other side of the river stood tiers of inaccessible crags, to which, if the ram had betaken himself, further pursuit would be out of the question, and this, I feared, was the case. Heavy showers now came on, and I resolved to return home; my luck had evidently deserted me. On reaching once more the scene of our wild pursuit, I suddenly caught sight of Taba and his pony on the very top of the opposite hill. Beckoning to him to come down, he explained to me in great excitement that he had seen the animal make for the bed of the stream, and had tried unsuccessfully to cut him off from the other side, where we should necessarily have lost him in

the rocks. He said he had been within twenty yards of the beast, shouting and throwing stones at him, but that he had held his own, and steadily crossing the stream had disappeared amongst the crags. Taba had followed him for some time, and then given up the chase. These sheep were, indeed, the toughest animals I had ever come across, and this day's experiences furnished the best proof of it, for the ram had gone on for miles with a hind-leg broken and a shattered shoulder, and yet our united efforts had been unable to secure him. We reached camp, after a long and dreary journey, at 6 p.m., and found the tents pitched in a small, narrow gully running northwards, on the Siberian side of the Nam Daba Pass. We were now about twenty-five versts distant from our last camp, and at an altitude of 8,000 feet. I heard from the ladies that the march had not been made without incident, for the new horses, which had been accustomed to remain feeding all day, were exceedingly loth to carry any baggage or to shift quarters. In consequence of this many of them stampeded, with the result of throwing over their loads. One in particular was a most vicious animal, and Littledale's largest sheep's head having been packed on him, the horns several times were in great danger of being broken. It had begun raining

in the forenoon, and had continued steadily all day, so that the tents had to be pitched under a severe drizzle, which was by no means useful for our bedding. We hoped to be able to get out shooting early next morning, but the weather prevented this; in fact, it poured all day, and it was not until the evening that the clouds gradually dispersed. Our cattle-driver had not turned up in the afternoon, and want of meat was beginning to be felt, when at last he arrived, saying that he had lost his way in the hills, and had been in search of us the whole day. I was much disconcerted about the big ram which I had wounded, though I still cherished hopes of finding him again, notwithstanding that we were now a good six hours' ride from the ground where we lost him.

Next morning, August 2nd, the weather being bright, we both started early to our new ground. Littledale went up a valley in a southern direction towards the higher snow-covered hills, whilst I went westwards into country as yet unexplored by us. It was freezing hard when we issued from our tents, and the day was a promising one. We rode for three hours, Taba and I, over nasty rolling stones, and across swampy ravines, without catching sight of a single animal. On reaching a row of grey, craggy hills, Taba suddenly stopped me, saying it was no use

continuing in that direction, because he thought there was a very poor chance of game, and suggested that we should turn back as quickly as possible and revisit our old Lake Valley, where we had found so much game from our previous camp. We raced back accordingly, as hard as our steeds could carry us, reaching camp at 9 a.m., having lost the whole of the morning, and, changing horses, quickly started in the opposite direction.

We ascended a long slope during the next two hours. As it was very steep and wet, my horse slipped and fell, bringing me down with him, but luckily without serious consequences. On reaching the nullahs with which we were already familiar, I began spying, and straight away found three rams lying about half a mile below us. Taba, who was slightly in front of me, had failed to notice them, and having shown himself too quickly on the skyline, made them gallop away. Great was my disappointment, as one of them seemed to carry a good head. We let them go, as experience had taught us it was of no avail pursuing scared animals, and following another low ridge eastwards, we presently came within sight of an old ram standing motionless on a rock about a mile in front of us. The wind being steady, we dropped down and decided to try for him.

We were now on a small *plateau*, at the head of two parallel grassy valleys, separated by low, rolling boulders, from which sprang here and there rows of rocky buttresses resembling ruins of old forts. These afforded us capital shelter, under which we were able to hide as we moved cautiously on. We continued in this manner for over half an hour, reaching a last clump of rocks about 500 yards from our coveted quarry, which was still standing like a statue. A slanting grassy saddle now only divided us, and we could advance no further without risk of being discovered; so we lay down to wait till the beast should move out of sight. The heat was intense that day, and the sky cloudless, and it was evident that the ram was pondering over which of the rocks he should choose to lie under in the shade.

As we lay awaiting further developments, a couple of young rams came up to within fifteen yards of us, probably likewise in search of shade. We both held our breath, fearing to disturb them, and they slowly passed us without having noticed our presence. These had distracted our attention for some time, and when we looked back for the big ram he was not to be seen. We accordingly started to cross the intervening ground, and on reaching the rocks where we had seen him standing, we found that there was another row of

buttresses further down, and as we peeped over the rocks Taba caught me by the sleeve and pointed towards a tower-like mass, with precipitous walls on every side, some 400 yards lower. There was my ram again, standing motionless on the very top of it! I soon recognised his massive, well-shaped horns. Again our only chance was to wait, and we presently saw him make up his mind, and turning away from us disappear over the rocks. Making sure he could not see us from his hiding-place, wherever it might be, we again rushed downhill, and safely reached the buttress. But here a delicate job awaited me, for in all probability the sheep had lain down under some protruding ledge on the further side of the rocks, and I should have to find him, and probably get within close quarters before discovering him. Leaving Taba at the foot of the cliff, I scrambled up the wall, rifle in hand and on the alert. It was rather a perilous ascent, and had it not been for some natural steps here and there where I could get my foothold, I could never have reached the top. Moreover, the wind kept blowing round at this place, and might start the animal any moment. I slowly advanced breathless, from corner to corner, till suddenly, forty yards below me, I caught sight of first a pair of horns, and then of the whole of the animal's body.

In my excitement I took a quick, standing shot at him, and fired again as he rushed down the rocks. In a second Taba was by my side, and as we both watched the beast running away at full speed we clearly saw that he was wounded. He went on, however, till he reached some steep crags on the opposite side of the valley, where he finally lay down. Taba said he had located him ; so, calling up the ponies, we made off in his direction in order to approach him again from above.

But the difficulty now was to recognise the rocks from another side, for numerous rows of similar crags ran down parallel from the top ridge. Dismounting, we made our way through the broken ground, peeping over the rocks, till suddenly we heard the rattling of stones and caught sight of him as he dashed down the slope. Bang went my rifle again, with the result of breaking a leg ; but this only gave him greater impetus, and following him down we got to the bottom of the valley in less time than it takes to describe it. I now thought that we had lost him, and was giving vent to my despair, when Taba calmly pointed the beast out to me standing on a ledge half-way up the hill. He seemed unable to move ; I could distinctly see the blood flowing from the wound, and thought I might go on and finish him off, but Taba's plan was

different. He ordered the second Kalmuk to circumvent the crags, and cut off his retreat from the upper rocks. This manœuvre having been accomplished, he beckoned me to proceed towards the animal, which still stood motionless on the same spot. We soon found, however, that he could move, for before we could approach him he turned round and rushed away. Running as fast as our legs could carry us, we again reached the top just as the animal had been turned back by the mounted Kalmuk, and as the ram passed within fifty yards of me at full gallop, I rolled him over with a bullet in his neck. Thus ended this memorable chase. I found that his horns measured well—51 inches in length, $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches girth, 33 inches spread. I was also struck by the fact that my four shots had told—two of them in the stomach, one in the thigh, and the last one in the neck. Meat not being wanted in camp, we left the carcase to the foxes and vultures, and only took his head, which we brought back to camp at 6 p.m. Littledale had come back empty-handed.

Next morning, at 9 a.m., we shifted camp eastwards and pitched our tents at noon at an altitude of 7,800 feet, after a short fifteen versts' march.

August 4th was an uninteresting day for me, although I went out in eager expectation of finding



COMPARING HEADS.

the big ram I had wounded. Though I came across several herds, we were doomed to be discovered every time we attempted to approach them, and on reaching a high ridge where we expected to find Ibex, we came across several rams amongst the most broken ground I had as yet seen; the heat of the day had probably caused them to intrude upon the Ibex. None of them I thought were worth shooting. In order to get a full command of the surrounding country, Taba and I made the ascent of the highest peak in the district, and discovered about a mile below us, lying on a grassy *cul-de-sac*, six very fine old rams, perhaps the finest I had seen. They were lying close to each other, all resting their heads on the ground, probably tired of the weight nature had imposed upon them to carry. We waited till 5 p.m., hoping that they might get up and feed towards us, but seeing that they had no intention of doing so, we started back for camp, leaving the herd undisturbed, and hoping to find them again another day. As for my wounded one, there were no signs of him. It was pitch dark before we got to the tents. Littledale was back with two good heads.

Next day we shifted camp down the Tarkhaty River, passing our friend Abduldho's Kirghiz encampment, but omitting to call upon him for fear of

wasting time. We marched up a small tributary of the aforementioned river, and about 2 p.m. pitched our camp. We now had in prospect for the following day both the same ground which I had visited on the previous day, as well as a new range of hills running northwards of us on the other side of the Tarkhaty Valley. These were supposed to be haunted by Ibex; Taba intimated that no sheep ever frequented them. It began raining in the afternoon, and so continued the whole of the following day. Consequently we resorted to fishing, but Grayling rose listlessly in the Tarkhaty River, and we caught but few fish. Towards evening the weather cleared up, and it froze hard during the night. That day I visited several of the Kirghiz *yourts*, and found them by far cleaner than those I had come across in the Kalmuk country. Large herds of horses and cattle (some thousands together) were grazing round the encampment, which showed how much richer the Kirghiz are than the wretched Kalmuks.

On the following morning I started, at 4 a.m., towards the hills on the left side of the small stream on which we were encamped, and presently reached a high tableland, from which I could plainly distinguish the Kosh-Agatch Plain in the distance.

That day I came across large herds of ewes, but found no shootable rams. We went on a long way, Taba and I, reaching the scene of our first adventure with *Ovis ammon*. The Happy Valley was now in sight, the Bain-Tchagan and Tchagan-Burgaza rivers, as well as the low pass over which we crossed into Mongolia. I felt sorry to think that we were so soon to quit these happy hunting-grounds and return to civilisation; but our time was up, and the approaching autumn was announced by the cold wind that swept across the high Mongolian Altai. We were being turned out by a late season. I returned to camp late in the evening in pensive mood, without having fired off my rifle. Littledale had come back with the meat of a young ram, reporting that he had seen several Ibex (female and young), but had failed to discover the fine herd I had seen two days previously.

Next day, on coming out of my tent, I found it to be a beautiful bright sunny morning, and decided with Taba to cross the Tarkhaty River and investigate the lofty spurs, which the hunter said were inhabited solely by Ibex. Littledale went back in search of the large rams. We waded across the river at 5 a.m., and gave the ponies a severe trial, as we ascended an exceedingly steep slope for a couple of hours. On

our way two female Ibex watched us for some time, and then disappeared in the rocks. The ground we now sighted was apparently devoid of grass; sharp-edged, volcanic-like peaks, intercepted by stony corries, and joined together by rocky ridges, gave the country an aspect of solitude and desolation; it seemed as if an earthquake had turned everything upside down. Sundry *plateaux* here and there enabled us to continue our course, and as we reached a high saddle which commanded a view over a wide stony nullah, I spied a dozen female Ibex lying on the opposite slopes about a mile off. Leaving the ponies, we ascended a steep slope over rolling boulders and shingle, and in about an hour reached another and higher *plateau*, at an altitude of 11,000 feet, in order to inspect an adjacent corrie, where Taba assured me he had always seen Ibex and, strange to say, sometimes Maral stags. This time, however, we found nothing there, though we carefully spied every nook and corner of the rocks. The horses had been led round over easier ground, and we mounted again to cross a large tableland and explore the nullahs beyond. Large patches of snow lay everywhere; our ponies were obliged to cross them, sinking now and again up to their bellies. Just as we reached the edge another herd of about

forty female Ibex came in sight. They were making their way slowly up from their feeding ground below, and were evidently heading for the neighbourhood of the snow patches. We were now within 400 yards of them, on horseback, and stopped in order to let them pass. Strange as it may seem, they did not discover us, and walked slowly away. At that moment I suddenly saw a fine old buck, then another, and a third, following the last of the herd. I now made desperate signs to Taba to dismount, and get the horses out of sight as quietly as he could, which he successfully accomplished without being noticed by the beasts. Crawling up to a small hollow, we waited, motionless. The Ibex were quietly making for the rocks, and we watched them for a long time till they had passed out of sight. With Wild Sheep we should never have been able to get off so easily. Three of the old bucks had particularly attracted my attention, and I was very anxious to secure one which seemed to me larger than the others; the tip of one of his horns was broken off, but the other looked a very good one. As they disappeared round a corner, I followed them as quickly as my legs could carry me, and could now just see the tips of their horns moving amongst the steep crags. They were evidently about to lie down ;

so, leaving Taba, I crawled on over the rolling stones. The wind was blowing steadily downhill, so I was obliged to circumvent them from below, and crept for about half an hour down the bed of a small stream till I reached the bottom of the ravine. They were now out of sight, and hugh rocky boulders, one on the top of another, stood like a broken wall in front of me. Amongst these I now began crawling up, and presently found that two or three young bucks were lying amongst them within 200 yards of me facing towards me, but I could see no sign of the larger ones. There was no possibility of an advance without being discovered, so I waited fairly an hour in a most uncomfortable position till I saw them lazily start slumbering. I had to seize the opportunity, and crawled on for over half an hour, hiding now and again behind the highest boulders, till, finally, I reached a corner which afforded me better shelter. On looking back a last time I saw that they had not been disturbed, and now appeared some 300 yards above me against the sky-line the tips of longer horns, towards which I made my way with the utmost caution. The wind was still blowing steadily in my face, and though now and then I was still in sight of the two young bucks, I managed somehow to get within 200 yards of the old ones.

I took over an hour to advance 100 yards, but could not venture to go further; so I steadied my rifle against a bit of rock, and waited till one of them gave me a chance by getting up. I could only see four or five horns against the sky, like the branches of a tree, and naturally could not distinguish which of them belonged to the larger Ibex. Presently, however, one of them stood up broadside-on, and I immediately recognised the one with the tip of his horn broken off. As he did so, I drew my bead on him and fired almost perpendicularly twice. I saw him stumble, and had just time to give him another shot which rolled him over. The others instantly disappeared. On getting up to him I found he had a good head, the unbroken horn measuring over 40 inches in length and $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches girth. Taba, who had been waiting some hundreds of yards off, soon came up, and helped to cut the animal's head off. He was delighted at my success, and gave me further samples of his broken English, although this time not in his usual vocabulary, which had been hitherto applied to failures. As it was getting late in the day, we decided to return to camp, and the road being a difficult one, it took us a long time to get out of the crags, and as long again to find the horses. At 6 p.m. we crossed the Tarkhaty River, and reached

the tents a little later. Littledale had brought in two more trophies of sheep, neither of them measuring over fifty inches. Next day we bade farewell to the Tarkhaty country, and decided to make a long march and pitch our tents on the banks of the Tchagan-Burgaza River.



RETURN TO TCHAGAN-BURGAZA.

CHAPTER VIII.

Pack-ponies gone astray; replaced by Camels from the Kirghiz—Again in the Happy Valley—More Stalking—Letters at Last—Weather breaks up—Kosh-Agatch Plain—Antelope—Our Bag—Start for Bashkaous Valley—Shooting Wild Fowl on the Kosh-Agatch Steppe—My Wife kills a Wild Swan with the Rifle—In the Altai Woodlands—Pine, Larch, and Birch—After Maral and Roe-deer—Grayling Fishing in the Bashkaous River—The Zaissan's Home—Kara Kodjur Stream—Unsuccessful Approaches—Wild Scenery—Sarry-Kol Lake—Tracks of Maral and Moose—Littledale Shoots a good Roe-buck—Our Camp at Yulientash—Absence of Deer—September 6th—General Retreat to Ongoudai—Meeting with Major Wissmann—Homeward Bound.

LATE in the morning of August 9th we struck camp. The cause of delay was that eight of our pack-ponies had somehow gone astray, and with this bad news our *demitcha* met us as we stepped out of our tents. His report implied that they might have been stolen during the night by the Kirghiz, who, he said, were addicted to such proceedings. Our opinion, however, was that the Kalmuks themselves had concealed them with the view of making us pay for them. The *demitcha*, though an energetic man in every way, who kept his followers in thorough good order, had

shown signs of craftiness, and we were therefore on the look out for some trickery. We let him know that we could in no way answer for their negligence, and that the entire responsibility before the Zaisan



OUR KIRGHIZ.

lay with him. Four camels were brought in from the Kirghiz encampment to replace the lost ponies, and at 10 a.m. we were on the move. The *demitcha* had despatched two of his men in search of the ponies, with strict orders to "find them," and naturally the Kalmuks soon reappeared with them.

Having passed the ground we knew so well, we pitched our tents in the afternoon at our first camping place, and forthwith sent Joseph to Kosh-Agatch with half a dozen ponies laden with our numerous trophies. The evening was clear and bright, and on the follow-



OUR CAMELS.

ing morning I was off to inspect the Happy Valley again, whilst Littledale followed the nullah southwards. Alas! I found the place entirely deserted, and though I followed the stream to the very head of the nullah, I saw but three fair rams during the whole day, though there were numbers of ewes on the slopes on both sides. These stood crowning the

heights, staring at us, and came down to feed as soon as we had passed. I returned to camp at 6 p.m. thoroughly disappointed, and Littledale had met with no better success.

Next day he went to the Happy Valley, whilst I stopped in bed tired and disheartened. Though it blew a gale, he returned in the afternoon with a fine massive head, saying he had come across a small herd of old rams, out of which he had succeeded in securing one. In the evening a Kalmuk came in with letters and papers from Ongoudai, the first we had as yet received, and we spent three or four hours devouring the "latest" news, of which the most important was an account of the Queen's Jubilee procession, which had taken place two months previously!

The following day, August 12th, was to be my last after *kotchkor*. The weather was evidently breaking up for the autumn, and a bitterly cold wind blew incessantly. Littledale went to the Happy Valley with my wife, whilst I went up the Tchagan-Burgaza together with Taba. We had hardly advanced an hour from camp, when we came across a herd of ten rams feeding in a small lateral ravine. Some of them carried good heads, and the wind being favourable, we attempted to stalk them. As they fed slowly over

a boulder, we started in their direction, following the bed of the stream, and carefully avoiding discovery by a lot of ewes at the entrance of the gully. As we descended out of sight, the rams were feeding about 300 yards ahead of us, and so I approached a



TABA WITH A PACK CAMEL.

small ridge from which I hoped to get my shot, but on peeping over with the utmost caution in the direction they had taken, I found that they had gone. As I continued to advance carefully, I heard, to my dismay, a rattling of stones to my right. Naturally I thought they had scented us, and as I continued

carelessly on, suddenly to my left a fine ram jumped up within fifteen yards, and immediately after the whole herd were rushing downhill. I had to take a standing shot at the running animals, which all got away uninjured. Apparently the noise of rolling stones I had heard had been caused by some other Sheep that had seen us. We went on, Taba and I, up the valley and over the saddle, reaching a stony *plateau*, out of which rose a steep mountain covered with reddish soil and shingle. Here we found the rams again, and made a long *détour* of about three hours to get to leeward of them, but when we again saw them, after a desperate scramble, they were lying at the very top of the hill in an unstalkable position. It was now getting late, and we had to return to camp on foot, having lost our ponies. My wife had succeeded in approaching within 200 yards of a herd of about thirty rams, out of which she had wounded one, which, however, was not secured.

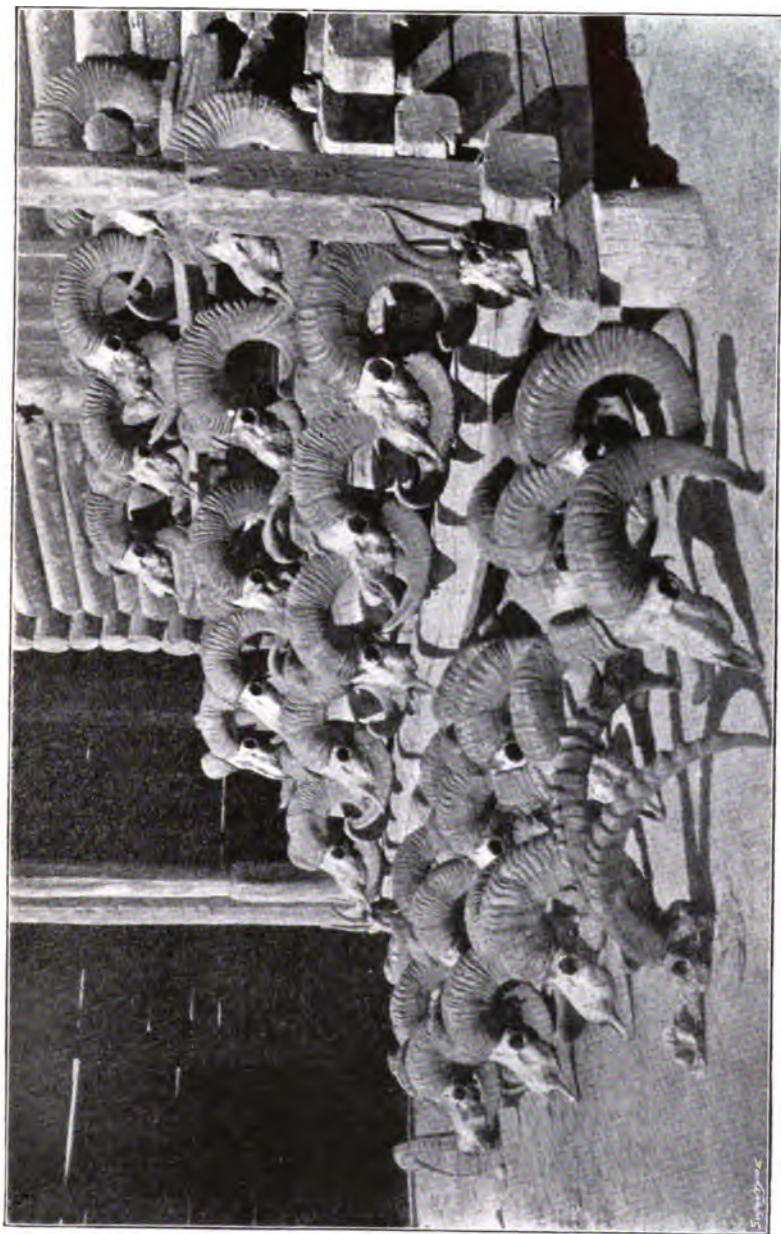
On August 13th the temperature had gone down so fast that we decided to lift camp down the Tchagan-Burgaza River, and in the afternoon pitched tents on the Kosh-Agatch Plain, with the intention of devoting the following day to the pursuit of Antelope. Heavy leaden clouds were rolling in the sky, and in a regular hurricane we left the higher ground and

bade farewell to the Wild Sheep country ; and I must own that it was a relief to find oneself once more on the lower steppe.

Next day the weather was again fine and excessively warm. Littledale and I went to different sides of the river after Antelope. Not far from camp I found a herd of about a hundred with some good bucks amongst them, but as there was no means of approaching them on the flat plain I suggested that they should be driven towards us by my second Kalmuk, who was instructed to make as wide a *détour* as he could before showing himself. He had not gone far before the whole herd suddenly got up, and, strange to say, darted at headlong speed towards the place where I was lying. I took a running shot as they passed within a hundred yards of me, and dropped one of them, which I found to be an old buck. Taba, who was an old hand at this game, said the best way to secure one was to gallop straight towards them, in which case, instead of running away, they rush in confusion at right angles to the hunter's direction, and then begins an extraordinary chase, the Antelopes making an outward circle, whilst the ponies gallop parallel to them in an inner one. As soon as they are near enough, the hunter drops off his saddle and shoots. In this manner we galloped towards

them as fast as our ponies could carry us, and I succeeded in securing a couple after half an hour's breathless ride. It was a curious sight to see these small animals tearing along the plain, while the faster they went the nearer we were able to approach them. Littledale brought in two others, which made a fair bag for the day.

On August 15th, at noon, we were at Kosh-Agatch. Here we were met by our friend the Zaissan, who greeted our return with signs of joy. We proceeded to take photographs of our bag, which consisted of the heads of thirty-two Wild Sheep, two Ibex, and five Antelope. We found a new Russian Customs official, who was most civil to us, and greatly assisted us in the preparations for our next journey to the Maral country. The whole of the following day was devoted to packing our trophies, which were carefully wrapped up in felt, leaving the smaller heads, which were not worth taking, and sending off the larger ones straight to Ongoudai. Daniel was instructed to accompany them to their destination. We found twelve ponies not too many for the purpose, and saw them start well loaded the following morning. We spent the afternoon in settling accounts with the Zaissan for the ponies and men, and decided as soon as possible to go after Maral. According to the



THE BAG AT KOSH-AGATCH.

Zaissan, there were two passes into the Bashkaous Valley, and he strongly recommended the Koukouriou Pass, to which, in our ignorance of the country, we agreed. The other way, he said, was much longer, and the path more difficult for the ponies. In the



PACKING HORNS AT KOSH-AGATCH.

afternoon of the 17th August we had finished our preparations, and went out Duck shooting on one of the numerous lakes of the Kosh-Agatch steppe. I still hoped to get the rare Duck I had been asked to look for by Mr. Alpheraki, but though we shot several, they were all of common species. Littledale

wounded a Wild Swan. After dinner the Russian official paid us a visit, and having learnt from him that the species of Duck I wanted was not uncommon in the country, I left with him my coloured plate of the bird, together with three or four skinning knives, and in return got his solemn promise that, within three months, I should receive a skin of the Duck in question at St. Petersburg. Two years have since elapsed, and the Duck has not yet been heard of!

Next morning we said good-bye to Kosh-Agatch, and, crossing the Tchouia River, which we now found fordable, followed it down along the Ongoudai path. We pitched camp, after a twenty-five versts' march, at the first station, called Kouekhtonar, where a small log hut was built for the few travellers or tradesmen who happened to pass that way. Before we left the Kosh-Agatch Plain my wife was afforded another chance of showing her skill with Littledale's Mannlicher at a Wild Swan which was swimming on a lake a hundred yards off. The bird dropped its neck into the water stone dead, and I forthwith stripped and started to bring it back, though the lake was very cold. Happily it was shallow, and I waded through knee-deep in the mud. We only remained that night at Kouekhtonar, and were off next morning at 9 a.m., branching away from the Tchouia Valley northwards

up a steep lateral valley. Snow had fallen heavily during the night, and the ponies found it slippery work to get on. The aspect of the country had entirely changed. Numerous trees on either side denoted that we were now entering the wooded



TWELVE PONIES LADEN WITH HORNS START FOR ONGOUDAI.

country ; pine, larch, and birch were the most frequent. About eleven o'clock we reached a pass some 8,000 feet high ; on either side were rows of rocky ledges, probably inhabited only by Ibex. The descent from the pass was a long and weary one, and as our horses were tired after their long march, we decided, at 1 p.m., to camp on the banks of a small

mountain torrent, which our Kalmuks called Karasou. Our tents were accordingly pitched on the timber-line, and next morning we started, Little-dale and I, at about 4 a.m., with the intention of surveying the neighbourhood. My companion crossed the stream and took the country on the right, whilst I, accompanied by Taba, ascended a steep slope rising almost perpendicularly from our camp. We naturally had to leave the horses very soon, and to continue till we reached the higher *plateaux*. On our way a couple of female Ibex came in sight, and we passed them unnoticed. The country above was broken and desolate. Very little game seemed to inhabit it, and all we saw that day was a couple of young bucks feeding on a patch of grass in a large corrie below us. The wind was bitterly cold, and I was half frozen when I decided to return to camp. As we descended the precipitous grassy banks at full speed, my foot slipped, and, turning at the ankle, the result was a bad sprain. Luckily we were within a few hundred yards of camp, and though I suffered agony, I was able to get back to my tent, where I lay in bed for the next few days. Little-dale came in at six, bringing the head of an Ibex he had shot, with horns measuring thirty-four inches. He had been on very difficult ground, and had not

come across any desirable trophy. He had met with a Roe-deer in the woods, but had missed him.

The next day snow lay thick around the camp. I naturally remained in bed with my sprained foot, and Littledale thought it hardly worth while going out, the weather being most unfavourable, with occasional cold autumn showers.

On August 22nd Littledale went out early, the weather having somewhat improved. In the evening he gave us an account of what he had done, and though he had come across a herd of thirteen Ibex, with a fine old buck amongst them, he had been unable to approach them, owing to the shiftiness of the wind. The higher ground he found was very similar to that of Cashmere; the scenery quite lovely in the region he had explored, and the locality well suited to Ibex, though the inaccessibility of the crags had often prevented him from examining carefully every ravine.

Next day, my foot being slightly better, we decided to start down to the Bashkaous River. Camp was struck at 10 a.m., and we descended the valley for about three hours. We were now in the midst of dense forests; the path was at times so narrow that we had to grope our way through the woods. At 1 p.m. we came to the junction of the Karasou and Bashkaous rivers, and found the latter to be a wide,

clear stream flowing through dense tracts of timber. The higher hills had now vanished, giving place to low, cedar-covered boulders. We took a last glimpse at the snow peaks in the distance behind us as we entered the heart of the woodlands. That day we came across several fresh tracks of Maral stags. We proceeded down the main valley for another couple of hours, and halted at 3 p.m. on the banks of the river, some five miles lower down. Here we pitched camp on a nice green lawn. Some of the packs had not yet come in, and we were beginning to wonder what had happened to them, when one of the Kalmuks brought us the news that Joseph had fallen off his pony and broken his arm. The doctor presently turned up with the invalid, and told us that the arm was broken above the wrist. The fall had been occasioned by an unexpected jerk of his treacherous pony. We were very sorry for poor Abbas, and decided to send him straight back to Ongoudai, in company with the doctor, as soon as he should be able to ride. In the afternoon we caught a few Grayling, and turned in early in order to start on the following morning after Maral. At 4 a.m. we were both, Littledale and myself, scouring the woods in search of Roe-deer or Stags. I noticed a great many tracks of the former, but saw nothing the whole

day. Littledale had spied a fine Stag about half a mile above him, but had failed to approach him, owing to the carelessness of his shikari, who, on arriving near the spot where they had noticed the animal lying, went on without precaution, and startled the beast, which they heard get up with a crash in the dense underwood close by. The weather was now fine and warm, but it almost froze at sunset. Our friend the Zaissan, who was accompanying us, now strongly induced us to visit his home on the Oulagan River, a small tributary of the Bashkaous, promising us plenty of Maral in the neighbourhood. We were naturally delighted to accept his invitation, and made a long march next day down the main river (about thirty versts). We fished on the way, my wife and I, in some of the deeper pools we came across, and caught several Grayling, averaging a pound each, but on the whole our fishing in the Bashkaous was not very successful, though we came across many likely pools. The hills had now practically disappeared, and the woods grew thinner; large tracts of low pasture ground stretched before us, and Kalmuk settlements were more numerous. Now and again we saw some smoky Kalmuk *yourts*, with two or three haystacks in the vicinity (for the hay had just been gathered), as well as many horse and goat skins

hanging on long poles as a pagan sacrifice to their gods. The weather was now warmer than ever, as if we had shifted from winter to summer quarters. The next day we pitched camp at the place where the Oulagan River falls into the Bashkaous, another twenty miles lower down. Here the valley, which had grown narrow and gorge-like in some places, became wider again. The country had entirely lost its savage aspect, and the scenery, were it not for the cedar woods, bore a most commonplace character. In the evening we tried for Roe-deer, but in vain ; in fact we could hardly realise the Zaissan's statement that we should find Stags in the neighbourhood.

Next day, however, we went up the Oulagan Valley and reached the Zaissan's house, which, in comparison to what we had seen before, was quite a comfortable lodging. His wife and children flocked around us, and an exchange of presents took place. I presented our powerful ally with the big revolver that had been stolen from me by the two runaway Kalmuks, and which the Zaissan had managed somehow to retrieve ; I presume after a severe swishing of the culprits. On my eager inquiry about the number and whereabouts of Maral in the vicinity, I was staggered by the Zaissan's answer that there were seventeen. He had been talking the whole time of Maral in an en-

closure. Having accepted a Bear skin which the Zaissan had kindly offered me, with his good wishes, we bade him farewell on the following day, and hurried back down the Oulagan in search of wilder country. Our days being now numbered, we were disappointed at having lost our time up the Oulagan River, though a visit to the Zaissan was the least we could do, if only to thank him for the civility he had continually shown us. Orders had been given by him to our former *demitcha* (Jacob) to meet us on our way, as we passed his *yourt*, and after a fifteen mile march, as we were pitching our camp at the junction of the Kara Kodjur stream with the Bashkaous, we were met by this old acquaintance of ours, who was now in his own country, and seemed full of pluck, and quite another man in comparison with what we had seen of him in Mongolia. He gave us a brilliant description of the country at the head of the Kara Kodjur River, and told us that it abounded not only in Maral and Roe (in Kalmuk the former is known as *Sougoun*, the latter as *Ielik*), but also in Moose, which he called *Boulan*. This made us most eager to continue our journey towards this Eldorado, though from experience we felt rather mistrustful of Kalmuk statements. Jacob had provided us with a couple of native hunters, whom we met on the follow-

ing day on our way up stream. One of these seemed a sharp fellow, and gave us some hope of success, for he inquired whether we could shoot, and said we were sure to have to put our rifles to the test.

On August 29th we pitched camp some twenty miles up the Kara Kodjur River, and found that the scenery had grown decidedly wilder. Having been told that the woods round camp swarmed with Roedeer, we went out, both of us, in the afternoon with our new men in search of game, but returned in the evening without having seen a single beast.

Next morning, at 9 a.m., we were again on the move, following the banks of the stream. It was a long march, though the Kalmuks had said we were close to its sources. On reaching the top of a low pass, at about 2 p.m., we came upon a beautiful prospect. About half a mile ahead of us lay a large lake known as the Sarry-Kol Lake. The hills all round were covered with dense forests of pine, cedar, and especially larch on every side. Large glades of low, thick bushes of a reddish hue lay here and there in their midst, reminding one greatly, were it not for the trees, of the Scottish Highlands. In the distance rose a higher range of mountains, half-powdered with fresh snow, in an immense semicircle. The whole picture decidedly bore a touch of loneliness and wild

desolation. In places the broad stretches of timber had been destroyed by wood fires, and the grand branchless stems rose high over the boulders, causing them to resemble the backs of gigantic Porcupines. After a long search for a suitable place, we pitched



OUR CAMP ON THE BANKS OF LAKE SARRY-KOL.

camp close to the banks of the lake. The weather was dull and cold, and towards evening it began to drizzle. We were in great hope of finding Stags, and though the rutting season had not yet begun, it was not improbable that we might find some feeding in the open at early dawn. I made out the altitude of our camp to be about 6,000 feet. It rained almost

all night, and as we started, Littledale and I, at 5 a.m. next morning, an icy cold wind chilled us to the bone. The hills were white with snow, almost down to our tents, and I certainly should have remained in bed if it had not been for the repeated assurances of our hunters that we should get some sport. We followed for some time the northern bank of the lake, and leaving our horses in charge of a Kalmuk, ascended a long, slanting slope, out of which rose here and there half-burnt poles of trees. The ground was white with snow, giving the country before us a fantastic appearance. As we toiled through the low bushes, we were soon thoroughly drenched up to our knees. On reaching a bit of open country, my new hunter and Taba both caught sight of a Roe-buck about half a mile ahead of us. I found it impossible to make him out, and confidently followed Taba in the approach we now attempted. As we reached a higher boulder greater precaution seemed to be necessary, and we crawled up to the top of it, but on peeping over found that the animal had disappeared. Taba attributed this to the shiftiness of the wind. On reaching the spot where the Roe had been seen, we found its fresh tracks on the snow, a fact which resolved my doubts on the subject, and so we proceeded. We wandered through the woods in this

way for a long time, peeping cautiously into likely glades between the trunks of tall larches, but without success. We came across a few tracks of Maral stags, but that was all. The wind was bitterly cold, and as I was by this time thoroughly drenched, I



SIBERIAN ROE-BUCK.
(*Capreolus pygargus*.)

decided to return to camp, which we reached soon after midday. On the whole I found this new mode of hunting most difficult and aggravating, and with but slight chance in favour of the hunter. Little-dale, who had gone westward, returned late in the day, and reported that he had only come across three

Roe-deer does, and although he had scoured large tracts of timber, had met with very few signs of Stags.

Next day, September 1st, we exchanged ground, starting at daybreak. It was a frosty morning, and a thick mist covered the whole country, clearing up towards 6 a.m. As we advanced through the bushes, nothing came in sight for a couple of hours, during which time we had journeyed five or six miles from the lake. As I sat down to spy a broad, open corrie, my glass revealed four animals feeding slowly in the distance. On more careful examination I found them to be two Maral hinds with their fawns. I had taken Jacob with me that day; the fellow was very anxious that I should shoot at least a hind. I naturally restrained his impetuosity, and as we were discussing the matter, my other hunter suddenly pointed out amongst the trees some 200 yards ahead of us a Roe-deer with two kids quietly feeding. As soon as the animal moved, I saw it was a doe. But this was not to be our last disappointment that day. As we made our way through the high bushes, which at this place came almost up to our necks, a buck and a doe suddenly sprang out and disappeared in a second, without giving me the slightest chance of a shot, and only just affording me the glimpse of a pair of fine

horns. A little further on Jacob pointed out to me the tracks of a Moose (*Boulan*), and there, sure enough, on the mud, were the well-known footprints! On our way back two more Roe-deer sprang out of the brushwood a few yards in front of us, but with the same result as before, and at noon I was back in camp thoroughly disheartened. Littledale had not yet returned, but had sent in the head of a fair buck, and at 3 p.m. he came in saying that he had seen another fine buck, but had failed to get near him. Rain now came on, but as it cleared up towards evening, we decided to have another try on the following day before striking camp. Unfortunately, however, it poured continuously the whole of next day, and we were obliged to keep to our tents and dig entrenchments round them in order to carry off the water, and keep the insides dry.

On the morning of September 3rd we struck camp, at 9 a.m., in a north-westerly direction, and again pitched tents at 1 p.m., after a fifteen-mile march, on the banks of a small stream at a place known to the natives as Yulientash. We had crossed a low divide separating two watersheds, and now found ourselves again in the valley of the Katoun River. The country here was very similar to that we had just left, and our hunters still promised us sport with Maral. The

ground, indeed, seemed suitable for them ; westwards of us ran a range of snowclad hills, whilst on all other sides the low, undulating country was covered with fir woods and great stretches of reddish brushwood. Towards evening, clouds still hung on the sides of the higher mountains, but the rain had stopped. As it snowed the whole of the following morning, it was not until after luncheon that we could get out in search of game. On that day I saw nothing but a Capercaillie. I found tracks of Deer, however, and occasionally noticed signs of Maral Stags on small trees, which were stripped of their bark, but no fresh ones. Littledale had succeeded in stalking a couple of Roe, and had shot the doe by mistake, unable to make out the horns amidst the thick branches. Another attempt next day proved as unsuccessful as the previous ones. Taba had suggested that we might find game in the direction of the higher ground westwards, towards which we now directed our course. Owing to Mrs. Littledale's bad state of health, my companion remained to look after her. As for me, I scrambled half-way up the steep slopes of the western mountain range, where the only living creatures I saw during the whole day were a female Ibex with a kid. I returned to camp at 2 p.m., thoroughly sick of this God-forsaken

country, and we unanimously decided in the evening to make a general retreat to Ongoudai.

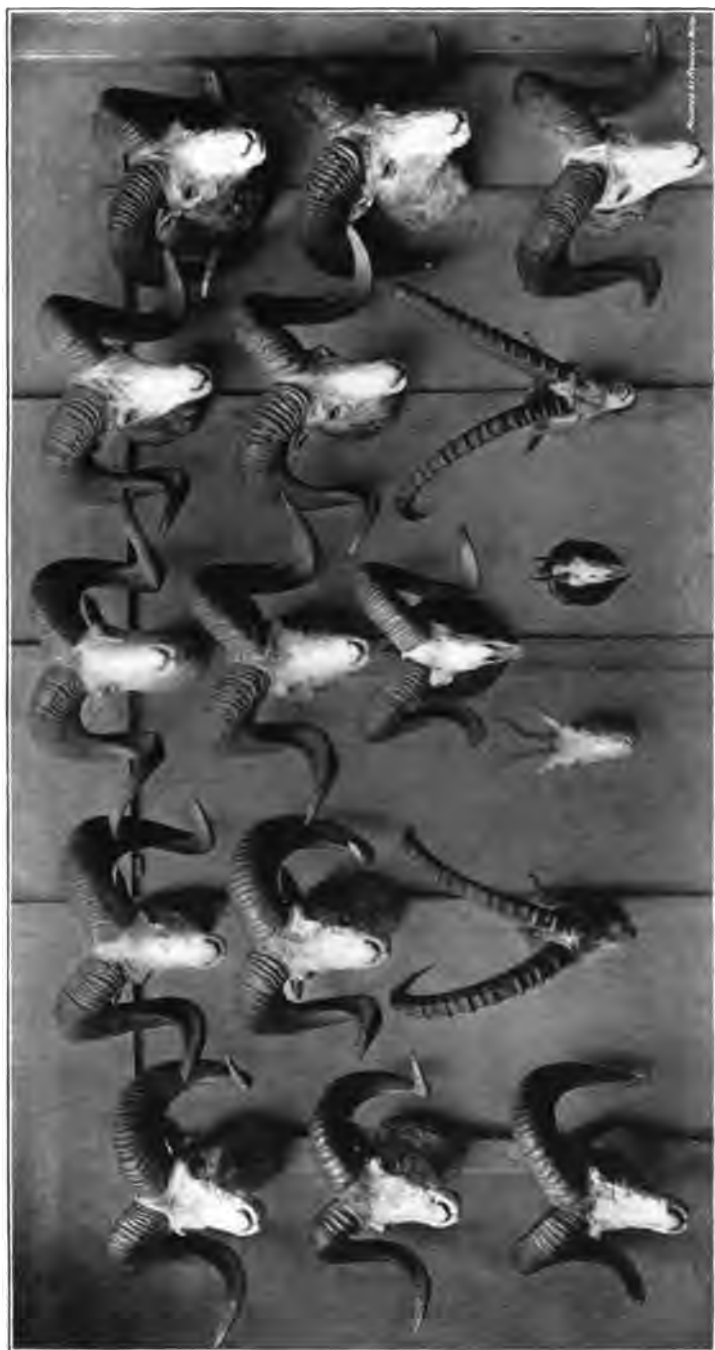
Next day a long march of about twenty miles over broad stretches of moorland and a low pass brought us to the banks of a small tributary of the Katoun River, where we pitched camp at 3 p.m. The weather was now evidently breaking up, and we were all anxious to get back to civilisation. Consequently, next day we made a very long march (about forty versts) down a small stream, and reached the Saldjar Pass, on the Ongoudai-Kosh-Agatch path, a little after 2 p.m. As we descended the steep slope into the Katoun Valley we met a caravan with two Europeans, who were on their way to Kosh-Agatch. We found them to be Germans—Major Wissmann and Doctor Bomüller, with whom we exchanged a few words. They were intending to cross the Mongolian *plateaux* into the Zaissan's country, and then proceed, *viâ* Tashkend, to Merv. We warned the well-known African explorer of the difficulties he would have to encounter, owing to the late season and roughness of the autumn months on the high Altai, and wishing him a good journey, parted with the first Europeans we had come across for a long time. At 4 p.m. we reached the ferry over the Katoun, which we crossed, and camped on the steppe close to its banks.

Next day Ongoudai was reached in the afternoon,

the last few miles being accomplished in *tarantass*, which had been kindly placed at our disposal by our friend the Zassedatel Meyer, who had himself gone away on leave. Here we discovered that during our entire journey we had miscalculated the days of the week, and that Mrs. Littledale, who, as she supposed, had been keeping Sundays most religiously, had by mistake been observing Fridays instead! We found that our trophies had safely arrived, and had been carted on to Barnaoul.



The next day was entirely devoted to paying off our men, and making preparations for the journey back to Barnaoul. We bade farewell to Jacob the *demitcha*, and on the 10th September finally left Ongoudai *en route* for Bisk.



THE AUTHOR'S BAG FROM THE ALTAI.

On the 14th we were met at Barnaoul by General Boldyreff and the Ispravnik, who greeted us warmly and complimented us on our safe return from our long journey. We remained a couple of days as guests of the Governor of the Altai, who helped us most civilly in our preparations for the start, and after a



OUR SPECIAL LUGGAGE VAN FOR TROPHIES AND PACKAGES.

hearty good-bye, we reached the Ob River a day later. Here fresh trouble awaited us with regard to the registering of our luggage. The horns alone weighed over forty-six poods. After a long and weary discussion, we were supplied with a special luggage van, and on the 16th September slowly steamed off towards Europe.

APPENDIX

LIST OF PLANTS FROM THE ALTAI MOUNTAINS

COLLECTED BY MR. AND MRS. ST. GEORGE R. LITLEDALE

Received January, 1898

<i>Anemone Pulsatilla</i> , L.	<i>Claytonia sibirica</i> , L.
<i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> , L. (2 forms).	<i>Dianthus superbus</i> , L.
„ <i>Cymbalaria</i> , Pursh.	„ <i>Seguieri</i> , Vill.
„ <i>plantaginifolius</i> , Murr.	<i>Lychnis apetala</i> , L.
„ <i>longicaulis</i> , C. A. Mey.	<i>Stellaria graminea</i> , L.
„ <i>pulchellus</i> , C. A. Mey.	<i>Cerastium lithospermifolium</i> ,
„ <i>sulphureus</i> , Soland.	Fisch.
<i>Aconitum napellus</i> , L.	<i>Cerastium trigynum</i> , Vill.
„ <i>Anthora</i> , L.	„ <i>sp.</i>
<i>Trollius asiaticus</i> , L.	<i>Cherleria sedoides</i> , L.
<i>Papaver alpinum</i> , L.	<i>Silene tenuis</i> , Willd.
<i>Corydalis stricta</i> , Steph.	„ <i>repens</i> , Patrin.
<i>Parrya exscapa</i> , Ledeb.	<i>Biebersteinia adora</i> , Steph.
<i>Cardamine pratensis</i> , L.	<i>Geranium uralassovianum</i> , Fisch.
<i>Draba glacialis</i> , Adams.	<i>Onobrychis sp.</i>
„ <i>incana</i> , L.	<i>Hedysarum polymorphum</i> , Ledeb.
„ <i>hirta</i> , L.	<i>Astragalus alpinus</i> , L.
<i>Chorispora sibirica</i> , D C.	„ <i>sp.</i>
<i>Smelowskia calycina</i> , C. A. Mey.	„ <i>sp.</i>
<i>Capsella Thomsoni</i> , Hook, f.	<i>Oxytropis</i> , 2 <i>sp.</i>
<i>Hesperis</i> ?	<i>Dryas octopetala</i> , L.
<i>Viola altaica</i> , Pall.	<i>Spiraea hypericifolia</i> , L.

- Potentilla anserina*, L.
 „ *multifida*, L.
 „ *grandifolia*, L.
Sibbaldia procumbens, L.
Saxifraga melaleuca, Fisch.
 „ *oppositifolia*, L.
 „ *Hirculus*, L.
Parnassia palustris, L.
Sedum Rhodiola, D C.
 „ *quadrifidum*, Pall.
Umbilicus spinosus, D C.
 „ *leucanthus*, D C.
Epilobium latifolium, L.
Galium verum, L.
Leontopodium alpinum, Cass.
 „ *sibiricum*, Cass.
Erigeron alpinus, L.
Aster alpinus, L.
Saussurea pygmaea, Spreng.
 „ *alpina*, L.
Senecio flammeus, D C.
 „ *sp. near S. goringensis*,
 Hemsl.
Artemisia rupestris, L.
 „ *glacialis*, Willd.
Pyrethrum pulchellum, Ledeb.
Scorzonera radiata, Fisch.
Leontodon autumnale, L.
Youngia pygmaea, Ledeb.
 „ *diversifolium*, Ledeb.
Statice speciosa, L.
Primula nivalis, Pall.
 „ *farinosa*, L.
Glaux maritima, L.
Androsace septentrionalis, L.
Rhododendron daouricum, L.
Campanula Steveni, M. B.
Polemonium caeruleum, L.
Gentiana altaica, Pall.
 „ *barbata*, Froel.
 „ *tenella*, Fries.
 „ *prostrata*, Haenke.
 „ *Olivieri*, Griseb.
Swertia perennis, L.
Myosotis sylvatica, Ehrh.
Eritrichium villosum, Bunge.
Castilleja pallida, Kunth.
Veronica spicata, L.
Pedicularis verticillata, L.
 „ *comosa*, L.
 „ *foliosa*, L.
Marrubium eriostachyum, Benth.
Leonurus lanatus, Pers.
Dracocephalum palmatum, Steph.
 „ *grandiflorum*, L.
Thymus Serpyllum, L.
Salix Myrsinites, L.
 „ *Brayi*, Ledeb.
Ephedra monostachya, L.
Blitum virgatum, L.
Rumex Acetosa, L.
Polygonum alpinum, All.
 „ *viviparum*, L.
 „ *Bistorta*, L.
Iris Tigridia, Bunge.
Lloydia serotina, Salisb.

<i>Allium sibiricum</i> , L.	<i>Hordeum violaceum</i> , Boiss. and Hohen.
„ <i>Semenovii</i> , Regel.	<i>Stipa orientalis</i> , Trin.
„ <i>tenuissimum</i> , Ledeb.	<i>Bromus inermis</i> , Leyss.
<i>Eriophorum Scheuchzeri</i> , Hoppe.	<i>Agropyrum cristatum</i> , Bess.
<i>Carex rigida</i> , Good.	<i>Woodsia illoensis</i> , R. Br.
„ <i>stenophylla</i> , Wahl.	<i>Cystopteris fragilis</i> , Bernh.
„ <i>melanantha</i> , Turcz.	<i>Equisetum arvense</i> , var. <i>alpinum</i> .
„ <i>melanantha</i> , C. A. Mey.	<i>Bryum</i> , cf. <i>B. caespitosum</i> .
<i>Deyeuxia</i> , near <i>D. lapponica</i> .	<i>Mnium rostratum</i> , Schwaeg.
<i>Trisetum subspicatum</i> , Beauv.	<i>Amblystegium fluviatile</i> , Schpr.
<i>Triticum caninum</i> , var. <i>altaicum</i> , Griseb.	<i>Hypnum uncinatum</i> , Hedw.



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